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THE GALLOWAY LOOP

By WILLIAM DAVID BALL

The Galloway Loop always brings home the bacon—if the right man holds the rope.

IG Matt Gunnison, his feet atop the rough pine table, shifted his bulky frame in the home-made chair as the cabin door opened to admit his two partners.

"Silver" Ed Duke clumped into the room, brushed the cap from his bald head, and with his fat, round face puckered painfully into a scowl, knelt to untie his snowshoes. Silver Ed was large of girth and short of arm; he always scowled painfully when he knelt to untie his snowshoes.

"There ain't no use looking for that pack any more, Matt," he grunted. "The thaw's been on the way now for two days and we've tramped all over the cussed range. Andy, here, is all tuckered out. Ain't you, Andy?"

Big Matt stroked his tawny beard with his pipe stem and shifted in the chair to survey the second of his partners. Andy Mullen's thin form leaned against the door frame, one snow-shoe crossed grotesquely over the other. Andy's sharp features wore an injured expression, his voice rose in a grieved falsetto.

"Two thousand in dust there was—and a good rifle, and blankets, and all. We wouldn't've lost that pack if it hadn't 'a' been for you fellows tryin' to—"

"Ah, hush up!" snapped Silver Ed. "You're always blamin' other folks. What we'd ought to've done was to beat it to Five Troughs last fall, soon as we lost her, instead of hangin' round here all winter. Fat chance we got finding her in all this snow. I ain't goin' to stay here many days longer."

Silver kicked his snowshoes into a corner and started for the storeroom. Opposite the table, he stopped abruptly to glare at Big Matt. "Ain't you even washed the dishes?" he demanded. "And loafin' here all day!"

"I worked yesterday." Big Matt's voice was reproachful. "Besides, there's enough dishes to last till to-morrow. And besides, I washed 'em last time."

Silver Ed stalked from the room, muttering. Big Matt leisurely removed his feet from the table and, ignoring Andy who was swearing gloomily at his shoe thongs, began preparations for supper.

Six months of the snow-bound cabin had set the partners' tempers on edge. The first big storm of last fall had caught them on the trail out from Buck Creek just at dusk. For hours they had struggled in the darkness and the wind-driven sleet to remove the packs from the unmanageable burros. The last pack, the one containing their summer clean-up of gold, was on the back of a burro who was blood-brother to old Nick himself. The brute had kicked Big Matt into a thicket of wild rose, butted Silver Ed into a pine stump, and bolted—the pack dangling under his belly, little Andy hanging to the halter rope. Big Matt and Silver Ed had finally captured Andy and the burro. But the precious pack was gone. They had hunted for it vainly, then taken the grub packs, wandered around all night, and stumbled into this deserted cabin.

Since then, the three old prospectors had lived a soul-trying existence in each other's company. The uncertainty of ever finding their gold, the deadly monotony of the snows, the oppressive sense of wasting their time—all combined to wear their nerves to shreds. Provisions had run low the first month; meatless days and other

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modern conservation measures had been decreed the second month. Now, that the tension was about to be broken by the coming of the big thaw, one word was enough for an argument, two for a dispute, three for a fight. The three partners were shamelessly, ravenously hungry.

"This is bacon day, ain't it?" asked Big Matt abruptly.

Andy, his mouth watering, frowned from the depths of Matt's recently vacated chair. "Of course it is. Ain't I been waitin' and thinkin' about it for a week? How much we got left?"

"Four-by-ten inch," declared Big Matt, squinting at the narrow strip of smoked meat. "We've got to find that pack mighty quick or get out of here."

Andy broke out suddenly in an irritable whine. "'Tain't fair, Matt. I'm so hungry for bacon! And Silver—Silver et more'n his share last Tuesday. I seen him!"

"It wasn't Tuesday; it was Wednesday," contradicted Big Matt with maddening calm.

"It was *Tuesday!* It was! I'll bet you a fifty it—"

Silver Ed strode into the room with a bang of the door behind him. Had there been hair on his head it would have bristled. His blue eyes blazed furiously above the folds of his round cheeks.

"I heard you! I heard you!" he cried shrilly. "Said I et more'n my share of the bacon. I didn't! I never! I et just only as much as I cooked for you fellows. Now looka here!" Silver stepped to the table to emphasize his words with taps of a short, stubby finger. "There's only one way to settle this, and that's for one man to own all the bacon. Then he can eat in peace and not be jawed by no hungry-guts for eatin' more'n his share. I'll play you for the bacon! I'll play you!" His fist banged the table angrily.

"How you goin' to play?" came Andy's querulous tones. "Our new deck ain't come in yet by aryplane parcel post. But you might think up some new way of betting."

Big Matt nodded slow approval, while Silver Ed sat sullenly upon the table. It was true. Their cards had long since been worn to greasy strips of meaningless cardboard. And as for betting on new games of chance, it seemed they had sounded the universe for vital questions to solve. They had used all their ammunition in a vain attempt to determine the best shot. They had sat for three hours at a stretch watching an overturned beetle trying to regain its feet—betting furiously as to whether it would turn on its right side or its left. They had spit at a crack until Andy had clearly demonstrated his superior accuracy, and the chewing tobacco had run out. They had disputed over the number of beans in the boiling pot, and had gone without supper to make an exact count. They had engaged in heated arguments as to whether a flea had hair; whether Baptists could exist in the Desert of Sahara; whether the skin of a Chinaman or the skin of a Piute Indian made the better razor strop. Truly, the burning questions of the world had been exhausted.

Suddenly the blue eyes of Silver Ed gleamed slyly. "I can fix it with you all right, Mister Matt Gunnison. You told me often you used to punch cattle, and that you was a A-number-one rope thrower."

Big Matt turned warily from the fire he had just started. His large, mild eyes, surrounded by clusters of tiny wrinkles, looked out innocently into the room.

"I was the champion rope twirler of Routt County in my day," he announced with a sweeping wave of the hand. "These little stunts with the rope that you been practicin' all winter, Silver—why, them comes as natural to me as growin' hair!"

Silver Ed smiled disarmingly. "I suppose you heard of the Galloway Loop. You can throw it, of course, without half-trying."

"I never heard of it by that name," countered Big Matt cautiously. "But I can throw it! There ain't a loop known that I can't twist. Just what do you call your Galloway Loop?" Big Matt's voice took on a patronizing gentleness, a tone of good-natured indulgence toward this struggling tyro of the plaited rawhide.

"The Galloway Loop," explained Silver Ed with a knowing wag of the head, "ain't

like any other loops. It's used only on special occasions. I've practiced it for ten year, off and on, and now I've got it! It's a loop that goes out straight to its full length, then settles *up* instead of *down!*"

"Oh, that!" Big Matt dismissed the Galloway Loop with a snap of horny fingers. "I learnt that the first year I rode. And you say you can throw it?"

"I'll throw it in the morning—for the bacon," declared Silver grimly. "But how about Andy here? I'll have to get his share of the bacon some other way."

"You ain't got Matt's share yet," flared Andy. "I'm on Matt's side. I don't believe you can throw no Galloway Loop. 'Tain't reasonable for a loop to settle up 'stead of down."

Big Matt chuckled. "It can be done, Andy. I done it when I was ten. But I don't believe Silver can do it. We'll find out first thing to-morrow. The bacon goes back in the pantry till morning. There's beans left from supper last night and some biscuits left from breakfast. Come and get it! And remember, Silver, if you crawfish back to Five Troughs and leave me and Andy to do the hunting, you don't get no share of that gold!"

Silver Ed, the deep creases of his face wreathed into a dreamy smile, made no reply. He was rocking himself gently to and fro, one stubby finger stuck in the corner of his mouth. "I'll have bacon three times a day," he mused softly, "clear in to Five Troughs."

The third day of sunshine dawned clear and sparklingly cold. The first rays of the morning sun, as they slanted across the snow-folded peaks, were made of palest fire, a fire that seared the eyeballs with its yellow glare, yet gave no heat. Later—how soon none could tell—the yellow would turn to warm copper; the big thaw, now feeling around the edges of the ice-locked land for a fingerhold, would leap upon the banked snow with an exultant rush.

Through lanes of shovelled snow six feet deep the three partners made their way to a bare knob above the cabin, a half-acre knoll, bare of trees except for one twisted pine, and scoured by all the winds that blew.

Silver Ed adjusted the honda in his rope with slow nicety. Big Matt and Andy sat themselves down and, in bored voices, passed rude comments on Silver's past, present, and future.

Silver's short, muscular arm suddenly came up above his head. The rope leaped outward in a wide arc. The loop settled gracefully about a tree stump sixty feet away.

"He's warmin' up," explained Big Matt to Andy. "Doin' his finger exercises. He'll keep us here till noon without any breakfast."

Andy's little eyes glowed. "But Matt, you and me'll get the bacon!"

"Sure. That's the only reason we'd sit here and watch this baby show. You and me'll cook up a big helpin' at noon before we start out looking for the pack."

Silver Ed continued making straight throws with the rope, paying not the slightest attention to the innuendoes of his partners.

"Give Matt the rope," complained Andy. "Let him show you how to throw the Galloway Loop."

"Now looka here!" grated Silver Ed, pausing with one hand in mid-air. "We'll have an understanding right now. This show ain't got nothing to do with Matt's throwin' the rope. If I throw the Galloway Loop, I get the bacon. See?"

Big Matt nodded with evident reluctance. "He's right, Andy. Them's the terms."

With a satisfied hitch at his belt, Silver Ed waddled to the twisted pine, produced a three-foot length of log, and proceeded to hang it from one of the tree limbs.

Deliberately he paced the distance back to his rope. "I can throw the Galloway Loop at forty feet—maybe farther," be bragged.

"You can't throw it from no distance," declared Big Matt.

"I'm so hungry for bacon," sighed Andy.

Silver Ed's composure almost vanished. He glared at Andy. "You hush up, you little runt! You 'ain't got no manners!"

A moment's silence followed.

Silver Ed hefted the rope, glued his

eyes on the lower end of the slightly swaying log, and lifted his arm. Three times the rope swirled about his head. The loop darted out in a hissing curve, reached its full length, hung poised for an instant a foot below the log, and like a living thing snapped upward to encircle its prey... Silver Ed had thrown the Galloway Loop.

An awful, ponderous silence settled like a cloud about the two on the ground.

"The Galloway Loop," admonished Silver Ed, as he shook a fat finger at them, "the Galloway Loop always brings home the bacon."

Matt Gunnison and Andy Mullen slouched slowly in the wake of a swaggering figure that led the way back to the cabin. At the door, Silver Ed stopped. With unnecessary care he cleaned and brushed his boots with his mittens, and entered the house on mincing toes.

The two losers leaned against the outside wall and stared glumly at each other. It was bad enough to sacrifice their juicy bacon, but to have Silver rub it in afterwards! From within came the clatter of frying pan and stove lids, and the raucous voice of Silver Ed raised in song

Big Matt winced.

Andy shook his head sadly. "Matt, I'm so hu—""

Big Matt savagely pushed him headfirst into the snow-bank, and stalked into the cabin. In grim silence he buried himself in the deep chair by the table and watched Silver Ed cut slice after slice of bacon. Delicious, home-cured bacon! They had bought it last summer from a farmer down in the valley.

"I'm goin' to cook myself a double helpin', while I'm at it," sang Silver Ed in a rollicking voice.

A sizzling, satisfying sputter began from the region of the stove, and an aroma was wafted through the room that made Big Matt gnaw his mustaches. Andy's head appeared in the doorway, his thin nostrils quivering like those of a greyhound at the leash. His little eyes widened greedily; he sidled up to the stove.

"Silver," he wheedled, "me and Matt gets the grease, don't we?"

A cloud of pain crossed Silver Ed's face. He stood motionless for a moment, as if speechless with shock. Then, gently, he pushed Andy back from the stove.

"I need the grease for my pancakes," he said coldly.

Big Matt rose with a weary gesture. All the jaunty, devil-may-care swing was gone from his stride as he crossed the room. "Get your webs, Andy. We better get to work. Eat later."

In silence the two tied on their snowshoes. As they went through the door, Big Matt turned to the whistling Silver.

"I suppose you'll be packin' for Five Troughs before we get back?"

"I've changed my mind, men," said Silver with mock solemnity. "A man ought to stick by his partners. I'll stay with you, lads, until my bacon's all et up."

Out into the white, glittering wastes the two partners plodded doggedly, fury in their hearts and vacancy under their belts. The snowshoes shuffled along with a hopeless, endless swish, swish, swish. For hours and hours they trudged. Not until the afternoon was wearing on did they break the silence.

"Most aggravatin' man ever swung a pick!" growled Big Matt with intense bitterness.

"It's the smellin' of it when it's cookin'," wailed Andy. "Honest Matt, when I smell that bacon, seems like there's somethin' chewing inside me like a rat gnawing my backbone. I'm so—"

"That'll do, Andy!" Big Matt's voice was stern. "We'll go batty if we keep this up. Let's talk about something else. Here's a bend in the canyon we ain't prospected. We'll circle it careful. You and me got to stick together now, son. Silver—he's no partner of our'n any more. Course, if we find the pack we've got to divide with him."

"Oh, sure—"

Their glances met for a half-startled instant, then were quickly averted.

"Matt," said Andy abruptly, "I seen you one day, when I was tryin' to sleep on the bunk, and I been aimin' to ask you about it. I seen you take Silver's rope and go out and practice with it. What was that for?"

"Why," beamed Big Matt genially, "I

was just keeping my hand in. When a man's been a real expert at anything, he likes to remember the old days once in a while by pulling off the old stunts. I didn't mind your seeing me, Andy, but I didn't want Silver to know. If he seen some of the stunts I can do with a rope, he'd pester the life out of me to learn him. Why, take that little Galloway Loop trick of hisn. Man from Los Angeles I met up with in Butte two year back had a movin' picture outfit back in the hills. I was showin' him some of my twists one day and he got all excited. He sent some men to tie a rope across a little canyon, and he made a girl with yellow hair climb out on that rope swingin' by her hands. Then he asked me could I rope her by the laigs, and I told him yes. I did it with the Galloway Loop—just as easy as rakin' in a pot with a Royal Flush. I roped her by the laigs. And we hauled her up. 'Fine!' says the movin' picture man, 'now we'll do it with the camera.' But I told him no, once was enough of such foolishness. And then —look out, Andy! That rimrock's loose!"

Andy, a trifle ahead, stopped just in time. A patch of snow, balanced on a shelving slab of lava, slid noiselessly down into nothingness.

Big Matt, forgetting his prowess with the rope, squatted on his heels and gazed thoughtfully across the canyon—a narrow, ragged gash cut into the smooth face of the plateau. Carefully he scrutinized, foot by foot, the snowy lip of the rimrock across the eighty-foot gap.

"'Tain't likely we'll find it, Andy," he muttered, "lest it fell in a sheltered spot where the snow didn't drift. Might make a hump, though, like that one over across there, close to the edge. Say! There's something black showing through the white!"

"That's her!" cried Andy excitedly. "Matt, I can see the rifle-butt stickin' straight out this way! And it's right on the edge. Must have slid. South side, and we been lookin' north all this time! How'd we come so near the canyon without walkin' in?"

Breathlessly they stared at the faintly-outlined canvas pack. There was no doubt about it. The rifle, fastened securely from the inside, could be distinguished clearly, the rawhide-wrapped butt pointing directly toward them. And down around the cold, polished barrel, nestled among the spare blankets, would be four buckskin bags—a hundred ounces of pure gold!

"Listen!" commanded Big Matt. "It's too late to-day, but to-morrow we'll make a crossing. It'll take a good half-day to cross, but we can make it where that side canyon swipes in from the north, two miles below here—remember? And we'll bring a rope to help us down. A hundred ounces!" he crooned joyfully. "Two thousand dollars! A good day's work, Andy. Two thousand won't split easy three ways, though."

"Don't seem like there's really enough in that pack for three," mused Andy.

"Hardly more'n enough for two," agreed Big Matt. "Course, Silver—he'll get his share, same as us."

"Oh, sure."

"Course, if Silver should take it into his head to ditch out for Five Troughs—"

Again their eyes met in a glance of woeful understanding. With one accord they rose and in silence took the back trail.

Snores greeted their arrival at camp, snores that echoed sonorously through the peaceful quiet of the hills. Big Matt glared silently at the sleeping form in the bunk, then went hurriedly to build a fire. Flour, salt, water, a handful of dried peas—and a nameless mixture was compounded in the frying pan. Big Matt watched it almost tenderly as it cooked. Once, he went to rummage in the provision box.

"Not even a rind," he muttered wrathfully. "Measly dog! As if we'd take any of his old bacon!"

"Plenty of molasses left, anyhow," sighed Andy as they sat down. "Think he'll wake before mornin'?" He jerked his head toward the sleeping Silver.

"Not him," growled Big Matt in deep scorn. "He's gone and gorged himself like an old sow-hog. He'll sleep all night."

The meal was finished without further words. Big Matt wiped his mustaches with the sleeve of his coat, leaned back, and seemed to disappear into the shadows

of his deep chair. Andy wandered to the store room, where with little whimpering sounds he snooped in the corners for a chance bacon rind. The slumbers of Silver Ed grew peaceful. The snores changed to a low, sibilant sound, like the contented purring of a cat.

Andy wandered back, and fell to heaping the fireplace with lengths of odorous pine. The crackling of the flames awoke Silver Ed. He roused himself with an effort to one elbow and surveyed the room.

"I et more'n half of it," he announced with sleepy glee, and eased himself farther down beneath the covers.

The new day came on the wings of a wind, not the rampant, fighting wind they had known for the last six months, but a mellow, kindly breeze that chuckled golden promises of green things growing.

"The fourth day—and the big thaw!" whooped Silver Ed as he banged the door open.

The morning air whiffed softly through the doorway to fill the room, and the three partners drew deep breaths of a wonderous perfume—the tang of southern pine and buckbrush. A tonic madness! It made one want to sing and dance and be friends with all the world! One's old blood raced, one's old veins leaped and surged—as if one were a boy again!

Big Matt gripped the edge of the bunk on which he sat; Andy, his fists dug into his cheeks, stared with fierce determination at the floor; Silver Ed capered about on his short legs and sang unseemly songs.

Suddenly a happy bellow came from Silver Ed, bending over the stove. "Who used up my bacon grease I left in the pan last night?"

Big Matt relaxed with a long-drawn sigh, followed by a grim tightening of the lips. He glanced at Andy. Andy, distrustful of his self-control, stared persistently at the floor.

"Say, Silver," began Big Matt, and paused.

Big Matt's acting was admirable; just the right blend of doubt and discouragement was in his voice as he continued:

"Silver, me and Andy run into drifts to-day that will last till Gabriel toots his horn. Suppose our pack's under one of them drifts?" His voice trailed off drearily, then went on: "It was sure some dark that night, Silver, and we don't even know whether we lost her on the south side of the canyon or the north side."

Silver Ed's round face flooded with sudden soberness. "I remember, Matt; we did mill around considerable. We crossed that cussed canyon three times before we hit this cabin!" He flung his arms wide in a gesture of finality. "It's a rum go! I'm through! You fellows can stay, but I make tracks this morning!"

"Aw, gee, Silver!"

Craftily, Big Matt's eyes sought the floor with seeming hopelessness. On the bench, the thin form of Andy Mullen shook as with a chill of despair. And then followed for the two conspirators an hour that tried their souls.

Again the fragrance of crisping, home-smoked bacon filled the room. Andy rolled in torment on the bunk. Big Matt chewed his long mustaches to a ragged brush. And while he packed his outfit, Silver Ed sang—a song of infinite sadness, of unutterable pathos.

"There's a long, long trail a-winding,
Where there ain't no grub to eat;
And the chipmunks and the magpies howl
'Cause there ain't no bacon-meat...."

There were tears of rage in Big Matt's eyes as Silver Ed stood on the threshold and with exaggerated ceremony bowed a last farewell.

Big Matt spoke in labored, shaken tones. "Andy and me, we're tired from yesterday. We'll probably be startin' home to-morrow or the day after."

Silver Ed, whistling merrily, shrugged his indifference, and slammed the door behind him.

An hour later, jubilant, noisy, the two partners emerged from the cabin and made a bee line for a point to the southwest.

"Two thousand dollars," chortled Andy over and over. "And Silver don't get a red cent. Say, ain't he a ornery cuss, that Silver? He's just plain go-to-hell mean!"

"He is," agreed Big Matt. "And him

so cocky because he can throw the Galloway Loop. Why, the cookie in our chuck wagon back on the Four-Bar-Four used to throw that loop and never brag on it. Silver needs a kink taken out of him. But say, Andy, didn't I work that slick? Silver never suspicioned nothing at all. I sure handed it to him clever. That was a great idea of mine about not dividin'—"

"Your idea!" Andy bristled. "Your idea! Why, it was *me* thought of it first, and it was *me* that saw if Silver pulled out the gold would all be ourn. You got a buzzard's nerve, Matt Gunnison!"

"Andy," chuckled Big Matt with unruffled calm, "you been 'sociating too long with Silver Ed. You got the same trick of wanting to hog all the credit. Now, if there's one crime I hates, it's goin' back on a partner. A partner has his share coming no matter what happens. Now, I'm willin' to admit you saw the scheme quick enough, once I mentioned it, but it was my brain that worked it all out. You ought to be satisfied I let you in on the clean-up."

Andy's lips opened for a biting rejoinder, and suddenly hung loose. They had arrived at the canyon; they stood on the spot from which Matt had discovered the lost pack.

"Matt," said Andy with a tremor of fear, "we're agoin' to lose it!"

"You're cracked," mumbled Big Matt, busy lighting a refractory pipe.

Andy dropped to his knees, shading his eyes from the snow-glare. The irregular hump on the south side of the canyon was perhaps forty feet lower than the spot on which they stood. Andy's little eyes blinked miserably. Directly below him, the wall bulged out sharply to the middle of the gap, where the bulge terminated in a ledge.

Andy shook his head sorrowfully, rose, brushed the snow from his knees, and laid a gentle hand on Matt's arm. "Matt," he pleaded, "why don't you wake up? Look sharp at that pack. It's slid down so it's just hangin' by its teeth. It'll take us a half-day to make the crossing. The snow's meltin' fast, Matt. That pack's goin' over!"

Big Matt roared. "Sufferin' coyotes! Why didn't you say so before?"

He stamped to the edge and glared angrily up and down. Suddenly the ledge below caught his eye. He knelt and began taking off his snowshoes.

Fifteen minutes later, sweating and panting, they stood on the ledge. The precious pack, half buried in a star-shaped bed of snow plastered on the very edge of the rimrock, was now but fifty feet away across the chasm. The rays of the sun beat fiercely upon the south wall. Already, little rivulets trickled down the fissures of the lava to join the seething torrent two hundred feet below. And the star-shaped bed of snow was fast turning into a sled that with the passing of brief moments would catapult itself into the flood.

In a kind of hushed awe the two sat down. From below sounded the steady, monotonous roar of water beating against rock.

"Two thousand dollars," mourned Big Matt. "In fifteen minutes—"

"In ten minutes," corrected Andy without interest. "I'll bet you a pair of pants it goes in ten."

"It was in four buckskin bags," continued Big Matt in a childish treble. "Four buckskin bags with little notches cut in the top. One of 'em was tied with a blue string."

As they watched, the patch of melting snow slid noiselessly for six inches. From Big Matt came a gasping shiver, from Andy a choking sob.

"Look!" cried Andy. "The rifle-butt!"

"What of it?"

"It's pointing sort of down."

"I can see it, you idiot. Of course it's pointing down. And that ain't all it's goin'—"

"But Matt!" Andy's voice grew tense. "Yesterday it was pointin' right at us. Now, it's pointin' *down!* The rope—the Galloway Loop!"

Big Matt rose to his feet and stared, uncomprehending. Frantically, Andy seized the rope from the ledge where it had been dropped, tied a running noose, and thrust it into the other's reluctant hands.

"Throw, Matt, throw!" sobbed Andy. "In a minute it'll be too late!"

Big Matt faced about with a determined

squaring of his wide shoulders, braced his columnar legs, and lifted his long, sinewy arm. Straight and true he cast for the rawhide-wrapped rifle-butt. Something was wrong. He had missed. Again he threw, while Andy stood breathless, on tiptoe. Twice more the loop shot out, hung poised for an instant in a perfect circle a foot below the rifle-butt, then slithered snakily downward.

A fifth time Big Matt squared his wide shoulders and braced his legs. He hesitated. He faltered. He hung his head. "I—I lied, Andy," he blurted brokenly. "I—I can't throw the Galloway Loop."

The slender form of Andy Mullen quivered, gathered itself together like a mad cat about to spring. Slowly he drew himself up to his full five feet of height. Big Matt averted his face to avoid the withering scorn in his partner's eyes.

"I've tried and I've tried," wailed Big Matt chokingly. "Honest, I've tried, Andy. That's what I borrowed Ed's rope for. I can never make the damn thing crawl up!"

Andy sank to the crumbling, frozen lava and began rocking to and fro, making little crooning sounds to himself. Almost timidly, Big Matt sat down on the opposite side.

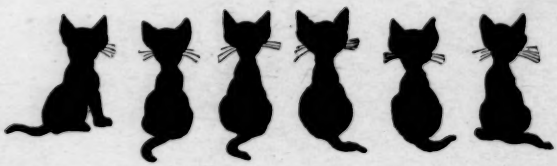
A moment passed. Irresistibly the eyes of both were drawn to the doomed pack on the rimrock fifty feet away. Imperceptibly, yet swiftly, the snow melted. The full weight of the rifle now hung above the canyon. It seemed to be pulling, straining at the gold And from below came the whining roar of rushing water.

"In five minutes," said Andy in a dull, matter-of-fact voice, "it—"

"In three minutes," stated Big Matt mechanically.

"In five minutes it'll go. And Silver Ed's ten mile from here. I—I wish he was here."

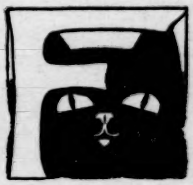
"Well," rasped Big Matt with dreary bitterness, "Silver Ed would be here with us now, if it hadn't 'a' been for you!"



THE EPISTLES TO TERRENCE

By RAMSEY BENSON

Somebody has to pay surely, when a young lady, on the way to a grandstand seat at the ball game, is detained for twenty-two minutes.



FOR twenty years Dan Dugald bossed Millbrook and had the titans of social unrest tied to a post, if not exactly eating out of his hand. A thousand factories belched black smoke from their chimneys and bred discontent in the bosoms of their operatives, but the politics of the place betrayed no revolutionary color. Dan Dugald was there to see that it didn't, and it didn't.

He had his office down in the banking district, and it was a landmark. It occupied the whole of an odd little building which in turn occupied the whole of an odd little corner of land jammed in between two towering skyscrapers. It was a relic of a former age ere Millbrook had found itself industrially and a man had to cumber his real estate with more than a story or two in order to pay interest on the value of it. The little building had a single window in front and across it in faded gilt letters these words: "D. Dugald, Broker." Knowing ones pointed to the sign and winked. The brokering Dan did wasn't much. What else he did nobody knew precisely, but it bulked big in the common imagination. Hearsay had it that governors came there to get their orders, while as for lesser dignitaries they frequented the place in swarms. Every year, just to give you a notion, Dan picked twenty members to sit in the legislature for Millbrook and sent them up to the capital like so many messengers, there to do his bidding as often as he chose to crack the whip. The annals of government of the people, for the people and by the people are full of bosses and their doings, but you would search far for a boss to match Dan.

He had the strong man's faculty for seeming never to be busy. Nobody ever saw him in a hurry, and he spent so much of his time standing before his window, staring out at nothing, twirling his glasses absently at the end of about a foot of silk cord, that more people knew him in that attitude than any other. If everybody in Millbrook hadn't seen him standing so it was because everybody didn't pass that way. Of course many didn't. Operatives in the factories, for instance, seldom went down into the banking district. For twenty years—till another Irishman by the name of O'Mahoney came to Millbrook and set up his rickety press and began to print the New Deal—they had little occasion to go there.

The New Deal boasted itself the cheapest newspaper in the United States. You could have it delivered by carrier for five cents a week, and the price, no doubt, was what got it started. Anyway it got started, and gathered force, and was at length a species of landslide. No better than a smudgy handbill to begin with, and never anything but a slipshod sheet, it nevertheless caught on so prodigiously that in no long time the carriers were throwing it each evening on virtually every doorstep in Millbrook; and the titans of social unrest, while they hadn't broken their bridles or pulled up the post, were champing the bit and pawing the ground in a manner as significant as it was unprecedented. Everyone read the New Deal, some because they relished its fiery audacity, the rest because they didn't feel quite easy to go to bed until they knew what fresh insolence O'Mahoney had perpetrated.

On a blistering day in August Dan Du-

gald, twirling his glasses before his window, looked as cool as a cucumber to the sweltering throng which surged up and down. You had to wonder at him for that, especially in consideration of the fact that his garb made no concession to the season. Summer or winter it was the identical black frock coat, buttoned up, and the identical style of high starched collar with flaring points, and winter or summer he was the picture of comfort.

A nifty roadster dashed up to the curb and came to an abrupt step. A young girl jumped out briskly, slammed the door behind her with one hand and waved the other at Dan up in the window. You saw at a glance how it stood with them. The girl was very pretty and the boss wasn't pretty at all, but nobody could doubt that they were father and daughter.

The passing crowd saw Dan's face soften. That was his only response but it was a good deal for him. The persons in the world who could cause his face to soften that way were not many The girl skipped up the steps and bounced through the door, and at that his face softened still more.

"How sluggishly we get about, Betty!" he remarked, with gentle irony.

"Your hat!" she commanded him, breathlessly. "The game is called at two-thirty and I want to be in time to get a seat behind the backstop. I want to see what the new pitcher has got on the ball."

Dan's invariable derby hung on a nail over his desk. Without giving him time to obey her behest she snatched the hat down and clapped it on his head, all in full view of such of the throng as chose to be looking. "Come on!" she cried, and laid hold of his arm.

His interest was perfectly manifest, though he didn't yield at once. "What new pitcher?" he demanded.

"Well, I declare! Don't you read the papers? Palmerston, of course, the Dartmouth southpaw. He held Yale to two scratches. They say he's got everything!"

"No!" ejaculated Dan, incredulously.

"Positively! He's going to put us right up among the contenders. All we've needed was a good southpaw to mow down the left-handed stickers. Palmerston is a wolf for work. He can go the whole route three days in the week and deliver the goods every time. He's got a fast one that makes Walter Johnson's look like it was standing still, and when it comes to headwork Christy Matthewson is a busher."

Dan's eyes lighted up more and more. "He pitches to-day?"

"If he doesn't Canty will never get home alive. He's published Palmerston in the batting order and all the fans are turning out."

"Looks like we can't afford to miss it, eh?"

"Sure not—come on!"

The boss glanced up at the clock. "I've got an appointment at two," he objected. "I can't go till after that. Can't we start a little later and make it?"

"Oh, shoot the appointment!" Betty flung out.

"No, I told Hoskins I'd be here. I can't run away and leave him."

"Hoskins! Who's Hoskins? I don't know the gentleman. Some old politician, I suppose. It seems to me that politicians do nothing but get in the way of more useful people."

Dan Dugald took off his hat and hung it up. "I see him coming now. You sit down and amuse yourself with a book. Or you can watch the crowd go by. We shan't be long."

"Oh, fudge!" commented Betty, ungraciously. "The old bore will stick around all day—I know it. That's the way with politicians!"

The old bore might almost have overheard her for he showed up in the doorway as she spoke—a fat, bald man in a wrinkled Palm Beach suit, steaming and sweaty. Betty turned her back and stared sulkily out of the window. She was displeased and so altogether willing to advertise the fact that Hoskins halted at the threshold, regarding her uncertainly.

"My little girl!" Dan remarked, informally, and Hoskins bowed. He looked a trifle pained when she didn't vouchsafe him so much as a glance, but Dan gave him no time to mind much and straightway the two of them were deep in their conference,

with their chairs drawn up to the desk and their heads together.

Not that they made any secret of what they were saying, though. They didn't lower their voices on Betty's account, but spoke quite as if they had been alone. She might, did she choose, hear every word that passed between them. Hoskins tarried exactly twenty-two minutes by the clock and he bowed to Betty's back as he passed out, his manners better that hers even though he should be a politician.

She let no grass grow under her feet after that. It was verging near 2.30 when she finally hustled her father into the car, and the way she burnt up the trail to the ball park caused the boss of Millbrook to clutch the seat and set his teeth together hard. The spin helped Betty's sulks, and when Palmerston proceeded to win his game in finished style she was so filled with joy that you wouldn't believe she had ever been crossed in her life.

EVERYBODY knows Kirby's, where a thousand clerks are not too many to wait on the women who come there to shop. From morning till night, but especially afternoons, twenty lifts shoot up and fall back without a pause and still barely accomodate the customers who throng the establishment. Kirby's patrons don't care so much about baseball as some, and that hot day in August when Palmerston pitched so prettily saw the clerks and the lifts as busy as ever.

There are ten floors and a tower, and up in the tower a dark little man dictated letters to a dark young woman. The man called the young woman Miss Smith, and the young woman called the man Mr. Epstein. Mr. Epstein, as astonishingly few people know, is the head of Kirby's, and Miss Smith, as nobody knows outside the house, is the only young woman he has ever found swift enough to take his dictation. Mr. Epstein goes at a headlong pace when he dictates and his slightly foreign accent doesn't make it any easier to keep up with him.

The lifts rose only to the tenth floor, and whoever was bound for the tower climbed spiral stairs the rest of the way. Not many were so bound. The head of the house had a fancy for solitude.

At the sound of footfalls Mr. Epstein paused to listen, with every mark of annoyance. The footfalls were undeniably ascending and Epstein scowled, while Miss Smith waited with pencil nervously poised.

In a moment a man stood in the open door. "May I come in?" he asked.

"Come in!" replied Epstein, pretty sourly. But he ironed the scowl.

Miss Smith withdrew to her own desk. That put her the width of the room away, but the room wasn't so very big and she kept overhearing things. She couldn't very well help overhearing, especially when Epstein raised his voice. Beyond a doubt he was angry and that made it hard not to listen. Miss Smith was wholly unused to hearing Mr. Epstein speak that way and it startled her and made her forgetful of her duty to pay no attention to what was no concern of hers.

"You have no right," she heard him insist, hotly, "to come here and interfere in my business!"

The man didn't raise his voice, but Miss Smith had her ears pricked up and she caught his answer: "It's no time to be squeamish, Epstein. The thing we're putting through is as much for your good as anybody's. A little more and nobody's property will be safe. Do you want anarchy?"

But Epstein's anger by no means abated. "My advertising in the New Deal is worth all it costs me," he shouted, and thumped the table with his fist. "It brings results. I don't want to discontinue it. To discontinue it would hurt my trade almost more than anything I could do."

"Is your advertising in the New Deal worth more to you than your credit at the banks?"

That was about all Miss Smith heard but it was enough to set her to thinking. The man went away and Epstein called her back. She could see that he was greatly put out and that didn't cause her to think the less.

For her health's sake it was her practice to repair each evening to Harley House Settlement for the benefit of the physical training there. Harley House offered an

excellent course and the teacher for women was none other than Betty Dugald, whose church was responsible for the settlement and whose interest in all things athletic was unbounded. Betty had the friendly way with her to win the confidence of her class, and so it came about that when Miss Smith found herself with that on her mind which clamored to be told to somebody she chose to tell it to the boss's daughter.

Nobody about Harley House thought of her as the boss's daughter, though. She stood on her own merits there. Politics, too, was an interest apart. Probably Miss Smith didn't know what a boss was.

Betty heard the story with deep interest. "Did he wear a Palm Beach suit about four sizes too large for him and all wrinkled up?" she asked.

He did. Miss Smith, with a woman's eye for details of garb, could testify to the Palm Beach suit.

"Was he bald—with a greasy face?"

He was.

"Hum!" mused Miss Betty.

THE New Deal published from cramped quarters. It couldn't afford better at first, and when it could afford better it had given offense to the interests which owned downtown real estate. O'Mahoney's office was hardly better than a cupboard. Literally you couldn't swing a cat in it. He let the printers have all the windows the counting room didn't take and made himself as comfortable as he could in a dungeon of a place, where the lamps burned all day and the electric fan was never still winter or summer. With the door open and the fan always going you could breathe in there, provided you weren't too fastidious.

August came with a series of blistering days that year, and O'Mahoney's office was a sweat-box. He kept out of it all he could but that wasn't much. He sat in the grandstand and saw Palmerston deliver those valued goods, but such relaxation wasn't frequent with him. He simply couldn't spare the time, and the next day he scarcely left his dinky desk in the sweltering office. Just about the time the game was being called at the breezy ball park the postman brought the first mail of the afternoon, and that meant plenty of business for the editor of the New Deal.

He ran through the pile rapidly, tossing almost everything aside with a glance, and then all at once a letter held him. The draft from the fan lifted his abundant dark hair on end and gave him the look of being stricken with horror, but it was no such thing. O'Mahoney read the letter once and chuckled. He read it twice and laughed outright.

Here it is:

"Sir:

If you know about football you don't need to be told that the time to break up a formation is before it gets started. They are going to put one over on you that will get you unless you beat them to it.

You know about how well they like you and your work of stirring up what they call class feeling. Class feeling spoils their game. They can't stack the cards like they used to stack them and they blame the New Deal

Hoskins is pulling off the play. You know about him. He made his money out of prison contracts. He hired the convicts from the state at 35 cents a day and some of them earn him as much as $5 a day. He is worth a mint of money and he's a director in almost every bank in town. He can use the banking interest as he likes.

He wants to be United States Senator and the influences that got him the prison contracts are willing to land the plum for him. They're the same influences that want the New Deal smothered. They've fixed up a plan among them and they're going about it with gumshoes on their feet. They don't propose to offer you terms. They won't parley. You won't know a thing about it till it's all over but the obsequies.

Or so they figure.

If you think Hoskins is a fool you're mistaken. He's got brains and he's got nerve—plenty of both. Your old friends, the influences, know how to pick their tools. They can tell the kind of metal that holds an edge. Hoskins is that kind. Don't get the notion that he isn't just because he

waxes his mustache like Louis Napoleon.

Most likely you understand about the merchants who advertise with you, but for fear you don't, just a word. No merchant is his own man any more. He owes too much money. He belongs to the banks.

If a merchant has $50,000 of his own he doesn't stop with doing a $50,000 business. He uses the money as a basis of credit and borrows as much more as he can. If he can borrow another $50,000 he spreads out and does a $100,000 business.

It's good pactice, too. If the merchant is anybody at all he makes the borrowed money pay him more than it costs him, and what it costs him is good profit for those that lend it. Everybody profits. Ordinarily the banks are glad to lend a good merchant money and when his paper falls due they are glad to renew it. But all the while they are under no compulsion to renew. They can refuse if they wish and if they refuse to renew the merchant is ruined.

Do you get me?

Hoskins went to Epstein yesterday and ordered him to take his advertising out of the New Deal. Epstein owes the banks half a million, and Hoskins told him that unless he takes his advertising out of the New Deal he will have to pay his paper when it falls due. Unless he does as the banks bid him they will refuse to renew

Of course Epstein kicked. He kicked like a steer. But equally of course he will take his advertising out of the New Deal. It's his only chance to save his life.

Epstein is the first. Every merchant that advertises with you will get his orders. They'll kick, too, because they like to advertise in the New Deal, but they'll do as their masters tell them.

You know how long you'll last with nobody advertising in your paper. They expect to have the New Deal under the sod before snow flies.

Now for the joker. The money the banks lend out isn't their money. It's the plain people's money. If the plain people were to draw out their deposits the banks would be like Samson shorn of his hair—they couldn't hurt a fly.

These plain people are Epstein's customers, too. He'd go broke in a week if they quit buying of him.

Who are the plain people? Briefly, the people who read the New Deal and swear by it. They don't want it put under the sod.

Do you get that?

Start something right now. Tell the plain people what's in the wind. Tell them about Hoskins and what he's doing. If Epstein takes out his advertising leave the space blank except for a brief line or two telling why the advertising isn't there.

One thing more. Don't lose your temper. Don't brawl. It's so hard for an Irishman to fight without seeing red.

Do you wonder what my interest is? Well, I don't like Hoskins. I don't like his complexion or the way he wears his clothes. I'd rather see somebody else United States Senator."

No signature! Very evident, too, was the effort to disguise the handwriting. But it was an effort which forgot itself. The first lines exhibited a vertical, high school style, clearly not natural. A little further along they slanted backward and that was even less natural. But here and there, to the extent of a word or so in a place, were passages which gave evidence of having been written unstudiedly. O'Mahoney's expert eye caught all of these.

A smutty boy darted in, slammed down a handful of proofs, and darted out. O'Mahoney yelled at him to come back and even at that barely made himself heard, with so great a clang and uproar did the New Deal get itself brought forth for the day, and so in the thick of it all was the editor's cupboard. The boy came back so far as to thrust his head through the door and glower—the lowliest in the shop confronting the highest unabashed and in the spirit of literal democracy. "Tell Tom to go ahead and make up. I sha'n't be out!" shrieked O'Mahoney, and the boy vanished.

The proofs went into the scrap basket. The editor had no time for them to-day. He slid forward in his chair and pulled out a drawer at the back of the desk. It was a little drawer, such as choice things might be kept in.

The thing he took out of it was a square envelope, delicately tinted and exhaling a dainty perfume. It had been sealed with wax and the wax was stamped with a crest, and the two sheets inside were likewise tinted and scented and embossed with a crest. O'Mahoney unfolded the sheets and spread them out side by side with the letter he had just read.

Once more he traced out the passages where disguise had forgotten itself. One of them was where the New Deal was mentioned. The perfumed letter was addressed to the New Deal. O'Mahoney bent down and made the comparison line by line, breathlessly, while the blast of the fan tumbled his hair about and stood it on end horrifically.

He sprang to his feet. He took a quick turn up and down the little room. He ran out into the corridor and ran back. He laughed boisterously. He laughed all over, like an Irishman.

Two letters: and it takes still another to finish the story. O'Mahoney sat down and wrote it there and then:

"My dear Miss Dugald:

About a year ago you favored the New Deal with a communication in regard to a more humane method of disposing of vagrant dogs. Because it was yours I wished to keep the letter by me, just as it came from your hand, and because it was mine I dared to do so. I have read it often meanwhile—because it was yours and mine—so often that when your message of warning and counsel came to hand to-day, I knew it had been written by you although you omitted to sign it.

Thank you! I could say a great deal more, but it would all come to that—thank you!

There is nothing in the world I so much desire as to be personally acquainted with you. Isn't there some way we can meet?

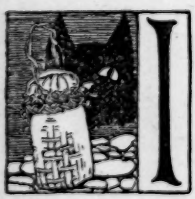
Sincerely,
Terrence O'Mahoney."

There must have been. The other day Dan Dugald was leading a stout youngster about the banking district and introducing him right and left.

"My grandson, Terrence O'Mahoney, Jr.," he announced, with a proud flourish.

AN ANSWER TO "Y" CRITICS

By WILLIAM H. CRAWFORD



IN sizing up the work of the Y. M. C. A., in order to get a true perspective, it is necessary to know what it has done and what it has failed to do. The "Y" has furnished a home for the American soldier boy from the day he left his draft board. It escorted him to the cantonment, went with him to the sea board, was his comforter on the transport, met him at the port of debarkation, went with him to the training camp in France, was with him on the battle field. It is with him in the Army of Occupation and will escort him back to American shores. In all these various positions it has attempted to furnish him with a home—with a place of refuge and rest. It has attempted to strengthen him by providing him with proper athletic exercise in charge of skilled trainers. The fields of France have echoed with the shouts of the American soldier boy engaged in sports featured by the Y.M. C. A.

It has attempted to amuse him, to relieve his lonesomeness and homesickness by supplying him with movies, lectures, dramatic plays and with vaudeville. Filteen miles of "Y" films went to France every week. The American soldiers can see their favorite stars in Paris, in the training camps or in the dugouts at the front. Famous dramatic stars have gone over wearing "Y" uniforms to play for the American Expeditionary Forces. The list includes such famous names as Southern, Marlow, and Elsie Janis. Famous directors such as

Walter Damrosch went to France under the auspices of the "Y". In other words, the very pick both of the movie and legitimate stage have been seen in the "Y" huts in France, and thousands of boys have availed hemselves of the oportunity of knowing the wonders of their art.

The "Y" hut has acted as a tie between the boy and his home. In it he has received his mail, and most of the letters that have gladdened his mother's heart have been written in the "Y" hut.

The "Y" has been the soldier's church. It has in no manner been dogmatic because it is a non-sectarian body. It has encouraged all religions, and the "Y" hut was open to religious services of any denomination. Usually the Chaplain accompanying the regiments used the "Y" hut as his sanctuary, as his house of worship. Some of the most famous ministers of the world have preached in these huts.

Not only was it his church but the "Y" hut was and is his school house. Here the illiterate learns to sign the pay roll and learns how to write to the dear folks at home. And the more advanced scholar may take up those subjects in which he was interested before the call came to fight for liberty in France.

And the "Y" has furnished an opportunity for the boy to purchase luxuries that otherwise would be unattainable, from which has come most of the criticism of the Y. M. C. A. It is for Americans to determine how much of this criticism is deserved, how much is due to a natural exaggeration of necessary discomforts always accompanying war and how much of it is inspired by ulterior and sinister motives. In order to give the Y. M. C. A. an opportunity to defent itself, the criticisms were put up directly to Dr. John R. Mott, General Secretary, National War Work Council of the Y. M. C. A. He placed at my disposal official reports and definite facts concerning the Y. M. C. A. work abroad. Furthermore, I have had a year and a half of personal experience with the armies in France, during which time I was able to form my own conclusions as to the value of the work being done by the organization.

The charges brought against the Y. M. C. A. may be divided into three classes, the canteen, an incompetent personnel, and a failure to do its share of work at the front. The first one of these accusations is divided into two complaints, a failure to keep a sufficient stock to supply the demands of the American Expeditionary Forces and a large overcharge for the things that were sold. The first of these is conclusively answered by the statement that the shortage was because of the inability to secure the necessary tonnage to transport the requisite amount of supplies. When General Pershing requested the Y. M. C. A. to undertake the canteen service, the Y. M. C. A. estimated that three hundred tons per month would be required. The War Department allowed them one hundred tons *when that much could be spared*. In reality, it was frequently reduced to fifty tons. If three hundred tons of canteen supplies were needed and only fifty tons allowed to be shipped, it is a self-evident proposition that five-sixths of the demands of the soldiers would be unsatisfied.

Second, comes the matter of overcharges. The American Expeditionary Forces have Quartermaster's stores—not so widely distributed nor so conveniently located as the "Y" canteens. These stores had to pay no transportation, no rents, no overhead expenses and no insurance. In addition to this the War Department through its War Industries Board determined the prices that it would pay the manufacturer for his goods, usually much below the market price. Therefore, the Quartermaster's stores were able to sell goods at less than it was possible to secure them at retail in America. On the other hand, the Y. M. C. A. bought in the open market, it had to pay the railroad and steamship freight rates, and transportation charges in France to the various Y. M. C. A. canteens. It also had to pay its insurance and its overhead expenses, consequently the prices were higher than those charged by the Quartermaster's stores. This was difficult to explain to the young men who had bought packages of cigarettes from the Quartermaster's

stores for four cents and were charged six or seven cents for them later at the "Y" canteen. They immediately determined that the "Y" was grafting, that it was profiteering. They thought the "Y" was getting rich on our soldier boys. This conclusion, however honestly arrived at, is absolutely false, the best evidence of which is that the instructions to the Y. M. C. A. canteen managers were that prices should be as nearly cost as possible. Furthermore, an arrangement was made directly with General Pershing that should there be any profit, it should be used for the expenses of the free service furnished by the Y. M. C. A. for the American Expeditionary Forces. More conclusive still, there was no profit but a deficit. Up to and including October 31, 1918, our post exchanges had been operated at a loss of $332,181.32, a total which includes no charge for rental of store space and no clerk hire.

The Y. M. C. A. secretaries frequently heard these complaints of overcharge, for the American soldier is not at all backward in voicing a kick. They were duly reported to the executive officers who took up the matter with the War Department with the result that arrangements were made whereby the Y. M. C. A. stores might be purchased from the Quartermaster's at the Government price. Since then the "Y" prices have been exactly the same as those of the Quartermaster's and are very much less than the current retail prices in America. This is not hearsay, I quote directly from the official price list furnished to every canteen. The articles quoted are not "bargains" but were selected because their retail price is well known in America, so that you may compare the current prices here with the prices charged by the Y. M. C. A. canteens. It is an exact transcript from the printed list except that I have converted the franc into American money and have added the current retail price in America.

The American prices are indicated in the first column, the second column is the price list in "Y" canteens abroad.

Chewing gum	$ .05	$.0275
Hersey's Nut Bar	.07	.0367
Smith Brothers' Cough Drops	.05	.0367
Colgate's Dental Cream	.25	.1651
Hot coffee, cocoa or tea	.05 or .10	.0458
Evaporated milk	.16	.1376
Bicycle playing cards	.25	.1376
Ever Ready Safety Razor	1.00	.7340
Bull Durham Tobacco, 1 oz.	.05	.0367
Dukes Mixture, 1 oz.	.05	.0367
Chesterfield's 20's cigarettes	.15	.0825
Fatimas 20's "	.15	.0825
Omar 16's "	.15	.0825
Robert Burns cigars	.10	.0734
White Owl "	.10	.0734
Ivory Soap	.10	.0734

The whole truth concerning the management of the "Y" canteens may be summed up as follows.

The canteens were short of necessary supplies. They were not to blame for this shortage because it was impossible to get them transported to France. The "Y's" prices were higher than the prices at the Quartermaster's stores and higher than the retail prices for these articles in America because of the excessive freight rates that it had to pay and because it could not purchase so cheaply as the government. Since the cost price has been equalized the prices charged by the Y. M. C. A. are exactly the same as those charged by the Quartermaster and are considerably less than the retail prices in America for the same goods.

The "Y" has not made any money through its canteens but has had a deficit of $332,181.32.

The second charge in the indictment against the "Y" is an incompetent and badly selected personnel. America entered the war suddenly. From an army of approximately 175,000 it grew within a year's time to nearly 4,000,000 men, about half of which were sent overseas. The entire army both in America and abroad needed Y. M. C. A. workers quickly. Repeated cables came from the American Expeditionary Forces saying, "Send us more Y. M. C. A. men." To supply this urgent demand there were but a few trained Y. M. C. A. secretaries available. Thousands of men who were refused for army service and anxious to do their bit, volunteered as Y. M. C. A. workers. From this number it

was necessary to cull out the most promising material. A majority of them knew nothing of Y. M. C. A. work, but the urgency of the call demanded that they be sent before they had had sufficient training or there was a possibility of determining their adaptability for this work. Great care was taken by the Personnel Board to select men whose records were clear and who showed potential ability. They selected nearly twelve thousand men and women. Out of this twelve thousand, charges have been brought against between thirty and forty persons. It is a remarkable fact that the percentage should be so low. The Personnel Board showed great acumen in making but forty mistakes in the selection of twelve thousand. Mistakes are heralded far and wide. Good work is taken for granted. The mistakes, errors, and incompetency of approximately forty men have been published broadcast and are cited as evidences of the incompetency or worse, of the "Y."

The next charge against the personnel is that the "Y" secretaries did not help the wounded, that they did not act as war nurses. This charge is answered as follows. The field of endeavor is so vast, the multiplicity of things to be done so large and the impossibility of securing the proper assistance so pronounced that it was an absolute necessity that the work should be divided amoung the various organizations doing war work. In this division of labor the Red Cross accepted the responsibility of serving the wounded and sick in the hospital areas, consequently the Y. M. C. A. was not at liberty to engage in this work except at the direct invitation of the Red Cross. In a department store you do not find the manager of the shoe department assisting in running the "cloaks and suits." The "Y" had more than it could do in its own allotment of the work and is therefore not to blame if some wounded soldier complains that he did not see any "Y" secretaries o missions of mercy in the hospital areas.

The charge has been made that the "Y" secretaries kept out of the danger zone—that they were perfectly satisfied to stay back in the canteens and sell cigarettes to soldier boys out of range of the shell fire, but that when the boys went to the front no Y. M. C. A. secretaries accompanied them. This charge is absolutely untrue. Personally I have seen many "Y" secretaries in the trenches serving cigarettes and hot coffee and chocolates free to the boys. Furthermore, the records show that the Y. M. C. A. has a casualty list to date reaching a total of 54 dead, and the grand total of casualties is 109, which includes those who were wounded, gassed, etc. As an evidence f their bravery the "Y" men have received honors as follows:

12 decorated with the Croix de Guerre
2 cited for this decoration
3 awarded the decoration of the order of St. Stanilas
2 personally decorated by General Petain
10 awarded the Distinguished Service Cross
1 mentioned for courageous work in battle
1 honored by American Marines
2 awarded the Italian Croix de Guerre
3 cited for bravery
6 commended for orders
40 cited in General Order No. 33 by Major General Dickman
29 have received honorable mention.

Out of a possible 10,079, one hundred twelve Y. M. C. A. secretaries have distinguished themselves by their courageous service. This percentage equals the records of our soldiers for gallantry. Consequently, while the "Y" men and women may not have accomplished all that their friends expected of them, they cannot be justly accused of being unwilling to face danger in the discharge of their duties.

The "Y" has made mistakes and some of the criticisms are just, for which the "Y" is deeply sorry; but the amount of constructive work that it has done, the amount of comfort and convenience that it has afforded the American army, the amount of willing self-sacrificing service that it has done for the men, so far surpasses its mistakes, its shortcomings, that the Y. M. C. A. has a just right to be proud of the wonderful record that has been made by its representative on foreign shores.

A NUMBERED NEMESIS

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

Young Mr. Moneypenny, more sinned against than sinning, sets in motion the wheels of retributive justice to make good his poker losses.

MARCELLUS Taliaferro Behan-Moneypenny—"Emptybean" for short—pushed back his chair from the poker table and rose somewhat unsteadily to his feet. He was "cleaned" for the third time in succession, and he thought he knew the reason why.

Shearson, banker, dealer, and proprietor of the "game," surveyed young Emptybean with an almost insolently contemptuous appraisal.

"Well, Mr. Moneypenny, someone's got to lose, and it might as well be you, eh?" he remarked, his white hands flashing like a prestidigitator's as he manipulated the cards.

A ripple of laughter greeted the speech. Plainly, the poker-room proprietor was at no pains to conceal his contemptuous tolerance, yet as a rule he observed a certain limit of badinage even with Emptybean. Pushed too far, the boob might transfer his patronage to one of Shearson's numerous competitors. Now, however, the words were so blatantly insolent that for a moment young Moneypenny with difficulty repressed a hot retort.

It was not so much the loss of the money—he could afford that easily enough; for he had more than was good for him—but he had a natural aversion to being fleeced, and the suspicion had grown almost to certainty with the passing of the hours up to midnight. The thing that stung, that rankled even more than the loss of the two thousand he had dropped in the past week, was the scarcely concealed and pitying contempt of the gambler and the players, some of whom, Emptybean shrewdly suspected were not indifferent to his habit of being a consistent loser.

Upon an impulse, therefore, he had sat out of the game, affecting a bemused languor which might easily have been real as the result of the liquid hospitality which Shearson, like others of his ilk, dispensed with a lavish hand. Now, at the gambler's words, he stifled a well simulated yawn.

"M-m-m," he said, without a smile. "Had a hard day, Shearson—regular nightmare, if you ask me. Just deal me out a hand or two, will you?"

He lay back, his eyelids narrowed to slits, his long, pale, aristocratic face in marked contrast to that of the "banker," with its bony forehead, heavy, pink jowls, cold, predacious eye, and traplike mouth.

Marcellus T. B. M., which perhaps might also be taken for "Tired Business Man," offspring of Old Man Moneypenny, President of the Noodle Trust, might not have two ideas to jingle together, but he did possess a pocketful of filthy lucre in inverse ratio to the amount of his gray matter, which so far appeared to be somewhat undeveloped—to strain a point in his favor. Like other rich men's sons, he fancied himself a high-flier, and as such was a more or less consistent contributor to Bill Shearson's one-man depository.

Perhaps Emptybean appeared to be a greater ninny than he actually was. Just now, apparently he was interested in anything but the game, but in reality he was watching with a hawk-like intensity of vigilance those white, flashing fingers, oddly long and tapering by contrast with the heavy face of the dealer; but if he expected to discover anything he was disappointed. Then, abruptly, a spark of interest glowed for a brief instant in his eyes.

Stivers, a pasty-faced regular, had just taken a pot. A dusky servitor was making the rounds of the players bringing spirituous refreshment. In the interval between hands the attention of the players had been diverted from the game; but Emptybean saw—and understood.

For once his wits, sharpened by the aggravation of his losses, focussed his gaze in a curious fascination upon those white, slendor digits, just now idly fingering the discards preparatory to a new deal.

Emptybean saw that which the others missed; and for a moment, if he had not known, he would scarcely have credited it. For the flicker of a thought the middle finger of Shearson's right hand had thrust in a lightning swift movement into the scattered deck, riffling them together with a sudden, sweeping motion.

It was a natural enough movement on the face of it, the preparatory gathering of the pasteboards for the shuffle and cut, but Emptybean knew it for what it was—the unbelievably swift arrangement of the double "crimp."

For a moment a violent impulse had almost mastered him, but not quite. He opened his mouth to speak, then closed it in a grim line as the game proceeded. Well, it appeared that he was not the only sucker among those present. "Some nerve!" he told himself silently.

He knew well enough what a crimp was—the bending in opposite directions of a card or cards, which, nine times out of ten, would be the unconscious selection of the man who made the cut. And it went without saying that Shearson, as the dealer knew what that cut would uncover.

Well, they had put a crimp in his roll, sure enough, nicked him for two thousand iron men; but—a sudden inspiration possessed him, and at the thought he had difficulty in restraining an exclamation. He would bide his time, and then....

Presently the game broke up.

Daylight was streaking the panes as the players filed out into the gray street—all but Emptybean, who assuming his most vacuous stare, sauntered slowly over to the desk in the corner where Shearson sat, a pile of bills and change before him which he was busily engaged in counting preparatory to deposit in his bank, the Thirteenth National.

"Some kale, Shearson," he greeted, with the privilege of familiarity, as he peered over the gambler's shoulder.

Shearson ceased his task for a moment and glanced upward with a grin. Of all the suckers he had ever known, Marcellus Taliaferro Behan-Moneypenny was at once the richest and the most verdant.

"Some kale is right, Mr. Moneypenny," he answered, "an' I don't need a bodyguard f'r it, either—see?"

He pointed to a heavy automatic lying in close proximity to the pile of bills.

Emptybean followed the finger, leaning closer in a sudden accession of interest. Spread apart just atop the pile were two one-thousand-dollar bills. Emptybean noticed that they were not yellow-backs, but Federal Reserve notes, black and white in color, the blue lettering of their serial numbers standing out in bold relief. He could read them easily:

A41144B

C23223D

Two thousand dollars—that was the amount of his loss.

Emptybean, as if overcome by emotion, turned his back for a moment and walked to the window, where he stood for perhaps a minute, his fingers mysteriously busy, but of course invisible to Shearson even had the latter been interested in Emptybean's action, which he was not.

Presently the scion of the House of Moneypenny turned on his heel and sauntered slowly back. There was an odd expression in his eyes which Shearson did not observe. The wolf saw nothing but the shorn lamb who would presently grow a new fleece for the taking.

"Do you know, Mr. Shearson," said Emptybean in his best manner, "I really believe that gambling doesn't pay."

"Yeh?" mocked Shearson. "You ought to know."

The game over, he had been addressing himself, more or less assiduously, to a square-faced bottle at his elbow, the while he tallied his receipts. He never drank during business hours.

"Yeh?" he inquired, with amazing candor. "It don't pay—the suckers, Mr. Moneypenny."

He laughed coarsely, as if enjoying a jest which he did not trouble to conceal beneath his usual rapier-like double entendre. It was almost as if he flouted Marcellus Taliaferro, secure in the knowledge that this particular sucker was far too obtuse to appreciate the fact that he had been "taken" even were the method explained to him.

A slow flush dyed Emptybean's cheeks. "I'll—I'll bet you gambling doesn't pay, Shearson," he said quietly.

The gambler guffawed. This was rich. When he could speak he said slowly:

"You'll do—what?"

"I'll—I'll prove to you that—er—gambling doesn't always pay—the—er—proprietor of a poker room, for instance."

"What's the big idea?" asked Shearson, with tolerant contempt. After all, it would do no harm to humor the boob, who had evidently drunk as well as gambled more than was good for him. "What's the big idea?" he repeated. "Goin' to reform me?"

"Well, perhaps not in the way you think; but I'll put it in another form: If I can take that two thousand there, for instance, without touching it"—he pointed to the two thousand-dollar notes—"will you admit that it's mine?"

Again Shearson laughed. Emptybean was certainly the crown prince of the nuts.

"You're welcome to try, Mr. Moneypenny," he gurgled. "But if I was you I'd mosey homeward and hit the hay. That's what I'll do after I deposit this jack—*in*-cluding the two thousand bones. Take a good look at 'em, Mr. Moneypenny."

"I have already done so," replied Emptybean, in his precise manner.

As Emptybean left Shearson's place his hand went to his breast pocket, patting something crisp and crackling. He breakfasted at a corner cafeteria. Somehow, he did not feel sleepy, but excited, rather, and it was after nine when, smiling broadly at nothing, he mounted the steps of the Thirteenth National. He drew from his inside breast pocket two notes for a thousand dollars each. They were Federal Reserve notes, identical in their black-and-white crispness with the pair he had seen on Shearson's desk, but with different serial numbers.

As he mounted the steps Emptybean's thought flashed back to a day two weeks previous when he had sold a Norman runabout to a stranger who, paying cash, had left him the two counterfeit thousand-dollar bills which he now held in his hand. These had been the occasion of much kidding from Shearson and the habitues of the poker room who knew of the transaction, but the matter had long since been forgotten—by all but Emptybean.

He smiled again as he restored them to their temporary resting-place, as if further evidence were necessary to prove that of all men he was the prize idiot of the universe and all points west.

As Shearson was leaving the Thirteenth National after depositing the spoils of the previous evening he ran into Emptybean going in.

"The early bird catches the first worm," he quoted cheerfully. As young Moneypenny had never been known to deposit anything except I. O. U.'s, the gambler naturally assumed that his best customer was dropping in for a new supply of the needful.

"Bring it round to-night, Mr. Moneypenny," he remarked.

Emptybean paused for an instant within the doorway.

"The worm turns sometimes, you must remember," said Emptybean precisely. Then: "Ever hear of Jason and the Golden Fleece? It took him a long time, but he got what he went after." Without waiting for a reply he vanished into the bank.

Shearson went his way slightly bewildered. "Now I wonder what he meant by that?" he asked himself. "The worm.... chasin' the golden fleas....."

For a moment his brow furrowed slightly, then he gave a guttural laugh. "A nut for your life!" he pronounced definitely, and went home yawning, to sleep the sleep of the justly weary.

Inside the bank Emptybean approached

the manager, to whom he was known both by sight and reputation.

"I wish to start an account, Mr. Grabenholder," he said. "I'm Marcellus Taliaferro—"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir—certainly, sir—" answered the official, and in 'arf a mo', as our English cousins have it, he had returned with a perfectly brand-new pass book. He led the way to the receiving teller's wicket.

"How much do you wish to deposit, Mr. Moneypenny?" asked the receiving teller.

"Oh—ah—a couple of thousand for a starter, I guess," replied Emptybean. But his fingers trembled slightly as he fished for a moment in his inside pocket and drew out the two one-thousand-dollar Federal Reserve notes, which, with the pass book, he tendered to the man behind the grille.

For a fleeting instant a curious expression passed over the teller's young-old visage. Then he entered the amount in the book and returned it to Emptybean. As the latter crammed the pass book into his pocket a piece of paper spiralled to the floor. It darted and swooped, then skittered along the tiles to balance crazily on end at the edge of a ventilator grating.

Emptybean went white. In one long leap he was upon the paper just in time to retrieve it from its perilous position. With a sigh of thankfulness he restored it to his pocket with trembling fingers. Then he was gone, also to seek solace in the slumber of the justly weary.

LIKE Abou Ben Adhem, Emptybean "awoke.... from a sweet dream of peace" to discover, bending above him, not an angel indeed, but the substantial person of Parks, the butler.

"You're wanted on the phone, Mr. Marcellus," greeted Parks. "The gentleman says h'as 'ow 'e won't tyke no for h'an h'answer."

"Awri," responded Emptybean sleepily, and after an interval he was at the instrument.

"This is the Thirteenth National," a voice came over the wire in a tone which if addressed to any other but the scion of the House of Moneypenny, might have seemed edged with menace.

Emptybean's heart gave a leap, as of apprehension, or exultation—or both.

"Y-yes—this is Mr. Moneypenny, junior," he replied.

"Har-rumph!" came the voice. "This is Grabenholder.... About those two thousand-dollar notes you deposited this morning, Mr. Moneypenny—"

"Y-yes?" said Emptybean again.

"They're—they're— COUNTERFEITS!" exploded Grabenholder. "Our Mr. Pennyfeather—"

"Not possible!" returned Emptybean crisply. His face was tense, keen, alert, his languid drawl forgotten.

"Fact," said Grabenholder, more mildly. "This is very irregular, to say the least, Mr. Moneypenny. There is absolutely no doubt about the matter, for the simple reason that we haven't any other thousand-dollar bills in the bank except," he paused, "two others, and we *know* that *they* are genuine."

There was a brief pause as Emptybean fumbled for a moment in the pocket of his dressing gown.

"Just a moment, Mr.—er—Grabenholder," he said, with simple dignity. "You're away off. You see, there are numerous—er—persons who have designs on my money, so I'm rather more than usually careful about such matters.

"As a little matter of precaution *I took the numbers of those bills*—get me? Here they are." He spoke slowly and distinctly: "A41144B and C23223D."

For a moment there came over the wire a thick blanket of silence, starred presumably with silent asterisks, exclamation points, dots—and dashes. Then there arose a burring mumble as of several voices—and something that sounded suspiciously like an oath. Then:

"I—I *beg* your pardon, Mr. Moneypenny. Awfully sorry, sir—an inexcusable blunder. Your notes are the real things. It—it's quite all right, sir. It's the two others that are phony. They were deposited by Shearson....Yes, sir, the gambling-house proprietor..... He'll be under arrest within the hour."

HIGH FINANCE

By ELWOOD BROWN

A owes B, who owes C, who owes D. If it were "loves" instead of "owes" there would be a dramatic situation right there. As it is, the situation begins to look dramatic enough when we learn who D's credior is.

THIS little yarn of mine works around in a circle and is something of a study in economics as well as bill collecting. The Big Coin Getter contributed the main idea, but his little circle would've broken if the Plute hadn't stepped in.

The Big C. G. was the head of our collection agency, and he knew how to load an account with more than one commission. The chief's real name was Willoughby Houghton, and he tried to live up to it. He was meant to be an artist. And he was, but not just the kind you hook onto a brush. His art was the art of money-getting and there's a lot of us would like to be Rembrandts. The Big C. G. hadn't put in much time with Raphael and Rubens but he could paint a creditor's hardships in any variety of colors and with plenty of appeal. The chief was one of these impressionists; he'd size up a debtor and tell you whether he had money or not.

I had been working for some time to collect an old timer from a singing teacher for one of our clients, Izzy Goldman, the jeweler. Izzy had reached the stage where he was in agony and begining to think he never would get his money. You know just how happy Izzy must've been. He was feeling no worse than a man losing his eyesight and hearing on the day of a foreclosure. Izzy was almost living in our anteroom.

The teacher's name was Lorena Lyman and she could sing better than she could remit. Well, I wore out three half soles climbing her porch steps and I knew every blade of grass in the front yard. She had one stock argument and it certainly was powerful. She said she needed the money worse than Izzy and until that major truth was changed she wouldn't pay. She also added, for sake of variety, that a season of waiting would be good for Izzy's immortal soul; that Izzy mustn't sink the spiritual in the material.

You can see I had my work cut out meeting those arguments, and even though I try to be as tactful as an undertaker, I can't go on forever. I knew the Big C. G. wouldn't take any stock in the spiritual side of collecting. All the soul the chief's got is tied up in the First National, and he spells his religion with one word: RESULTS.

Well, Miss Lorena and I jockeyed along quite a while and finally I began to lose my air of friendliness and she got to the point of refusing to answer the door bell. She knew my footstep when I turned the street corner.

One day I got exasperated. I hung around on the front porch a few minutes and then pretended to go away. Instead I waited a bit and then sneaked to the back door. As I passed the bathroom window I caught a snatch of song. It was real music and I stopped to listen. She sang a few bars then splashed around in the water and followed with more notes. They might've been called liquid notes, but I don't like poor puns.

There was an empty box near-by which I brought into service. I hauled it up under the window and sat down. I settled myself to enjoy a little real opera. I may be only an agency bill collector but I know The Love Tales of Hoffman and the Bohemian Girl, even some of the heavy Wagner stuff. I was meant for higher things.

The bathroom window was open and out

floated some of the sweetest, purest notes I have ever heard. They carried me off to the old-time castles with the fir trees all around and the big blue sky overhead and —you know just how I felt—not a bit like pressing my job.

She sang and she splashed and she splashed and she sang, and I sat there and just thrilled with that glorious music and didn't care whether I collected or not.

Then she made a mistake and I dropped from the clouds to my box. She turned loose a cheap, rag-time, Lizzy-hurry-up piece, and it wasn't long till I was back to business and no sympathy.

Getting ready one of my best duns, I opened up with a little cough, one of these pardon-me-if-I-interrupt coughs.

She stopped at the top of a bar, gave one terrible little splashing and a chokey gasp. I coughed a little louder. All was quiet in the bathroom. For the first time since I had known Miss Lorena she had nothing to say.

You will understand my business is a hardening one. It requires a certain courage and nerve and we must take our opportunities as they come.

"Miss Lyman, I am back again," I announced, "and I am going to sit outside here till Mr. Goldman's check is forthcoming."

I heard one great commotion in the water, then quiet.

After a little wait her voice came out to me and it wasn't completely under control: "If—if you are a gentleman you will leave your station at once!"

"I am always a gentleman," I answered, a bit fiery. "I am not here from choice. If you refuse to talk to me at the front and back doors can you blame me if I try the bathroom window?"

I thought that was a pretty fair comeback. But I could see she was still very much upset and probably clinging fast to the sides of the tub.

"I'll have you arrested for trespassing!" she threatened. "I never will pay Mr. Goldman's bill, never! If I had a million in the bank, Mr. Goldman wouldn't get a nickel!"

She was going out of her way to be mean. I kept quiet a few minutes studying the best way to continue. You see how unreasonable a debtor can be. I decided to present Izzy's case with all the feeling I had. I told her that Izzy was greased for the slide to bankruptcy; that he awoke every morning to face a line of hungry creditors; that six attachments, twelve suits and nine judgments, not to mention five supplementary proceedings were taking Izzy down in a sucking whirlpool.

I got so worked up over Izzy's troubles that I failed to note the teacher's silence. After getting Izzy to the point of assigning, I thought a little flattery would be appreciated. "If you would care to relieve my worries by a little more music it would be delightful. Your voice is—is superb."

My education has been scattering and I use good and bad English, but I am ambitious and I strain a point to get an expressive word.

She surprised me. She cut loose from Il Trovatore, that Home To Our Mountains one, and I'm blessed if I didn't hum the tenor. And my heart and soul went drifting away on wings and I felt all the romance of that wonderful age that is gone forever come over me with its glamour and bewitching spell. And for ten minutes I was in a paradise of singing angels.

And then I came to earth with a splash. A large bowlful of water shot out of that window and drenched me thoroughly.

She stuck her head out the window with her pretty hair all mussed and fluffy from partial drying and her eyes shooting forty thousand sparks. "Come once again on my place and you'll sing tenor with the jail quartette!"

"This is my reward for doing my duty!" I said sadly. "And after the inspiration of your magnificent singing!"

She misjudged me. The window came down with a slam, and I hastened from the place.

It didn't look like a promising collection. But, you will understand, our specialty is handling just those kind of bills. Wet as I was I left her with a Louis-the-Fourteenth bow, just like that one in the recent show where the hero hangs on to

his gallantry though spurned through four long acts.

I told the Big C. G. about it, but I left out the disagreeable finish. I was afraid he wouldn't exactly approve. Later on I had reason to wish I had told him all. It came near costing him a heavy commission.

On our collection staff there was a young dawdler, who drew pictures as a side line. Every time a new collection method was tried he illustrated it and hung it over the chief's desk. Well, he worked mine up, showing a cluster of high notes coming through a bathroom window and me beneath with mouth wide open, singing the words of a Hebrew financial swan song set to Il Trovatore.

I mention this and another important fact to keep my story straight. In my calls on Miss Lorena I always represented myself as coming directly from Goldman, not from a collection agency. A lot of people don't fancy agency collectors; we're labeled "enemy" at the start. Some of us are kind-hearted and we never hurt anyone's feelings if he'll pay. From the way I talked about Izzy you'd thought we'd loaned together in the same pawn shop.

While I was recuperating and waiting for inspiration to proceed further with Miss Lorena, I varied my work by soliciting for new accounts to collect, and this brings me to the Plute and the second arc of my circle. You see the Plute was Izzy's landlord, though I didn't know that at first.

His real name was Mitchell Burris and he was a find. Never have I seen a man of so imposing a front. His backbone was good too; and he had plenty of nerve and a keen sense of humor.

I wanted to handle his accounts for he owned the best part of a city ward and we were good rent collectors.

Though he made me look like a pebble beside a monument, I put up a good talk and before long I was running through a list of his delinquent tenants, and near the bottom came full upon Israel Goldman, jeweler. Izzy was three months in arrears on his rent. I had thought Izzy's hard luck story had been given merely for decorative purposes, for he had not spared the brush.

"What rea on does he give for the holdout?" I asked.

"The little Hebrew is conserving his capital," answered the Plute. "He's good all right financially as pure white as any of his best diamonds. Last month he sprained his right wrist and couldn't sign a check. The month before he changed banks; before that he was breaking in new bookkeepers. Most people pay taxes semi-annually; Goldman has to meet his monthly. You understand?"

"Completely. Have any dear relatives died on him recently?" I asked. "That will come next."

When I got back to the office the Big C. G. was delighted to get the new business, but he was a bit puzzled about how to handle the account against Izzy Goldman. For there are ethics in the collection business, and Izzy was our client. However the chief was not long in doubt.

"Hurry up an' collect the bill due from Lorena Lyman. Then we'll coax Izzy to let us apply the money on what he owes Burris. We'll get commissions from both of them."

Leave it to the chief. He can tell cream when it's rising. It sounded easy, but he didn't know the status of the Lorena Lyman account. Again, if I had only told him I would have missed a lot of real suffering.

Unexpectedly a few days later a way out of the difficulty appeared. The chief took me into his private room and pointing to his mail in the way he does when he has a surprise lined up for you, he asked: "Whom do you think we have for a new client?"

"Can't guess," I answered.

The Big C. G. put on his impressive look, the one he uses when he tries to tell a minor magistrate where to head in at when the law's doubtful.

"No other than the lady of the bath!"

"Miss Lorena wants us to work for her?" I gasped. You could have waved me over with a feather. Suddenly to be needed after you have been abused, despised and showered water upon, stirs up strange feelings in the human breast.

"Listen to this letter: 'The Coin Getters

Collection Agency, Unlimited, Gentlemen: Your excellent reputation for getting results encourages me to send you an account on which I will willingly pay twenty-five per cent commission if you are successful. I am a professional singing teacher. One of my pupils, Mr. Percy Shilling, owes me for fifty lessons. My rate is $2.00 per lesson, making a bill of $100. He is poor pay, but I think persistent calling will bring the money. Please do your best.'"

The chief turned to me. "Evidently she hasn't the slightest idea we are handling the Izzy Goldman bill against her. You have used commendable strategy; it will facilitate matters, augment our commissions. You see we can effect the Percy collection, take our commission, apply the balance on her account to Goldman, take our commission, turn over to Burris, take our commission—"

"You're a bit rapid for me," I interrupted. "But I have confidence in the net result. I would suggest you take down from your walls the motto, 'WORK AND WIN' and substitute, 'TAKE OUR COMMISSION.'"

The chief was a bit hurt. Some of his motives were good and he always had both hands to the plow.

And now we get well around on our circle to Percy, and you will see how naturally he fits in. It was not unusual that Lorena should give us the claim against Percy for we ran the largest collection agency in the city, were first sought, and Percy needed strenuous treatment.

Of course I felt a bit queer being switched over to Lorena's banner after having passed through the chilling encounter at the bathroom window. But a bill collector is trained to take nothing personally. I had no feeling of left-handed disloyalty to the situation. I would try as hard to collect for her as I had from her.

Percy didn't loom up as a financial heavyweight. He bossed a garage and repair shop and he certainly was an odd mixture. Pink cheeks and garage grease, a sissy and an expert mechanic, a high tenor and a fiend on carburetors, and you have Percy.

I walked into the garage and shook hands with him, remarking that the weather was as cheering as a new banknote, and then I got onto my heart-to-heart strain where it's a case of Jonathan and David, best friends ever.

"Mr. Shilling, I know we're going to get along famously together. I felt that the minute I looked into your face. You are a man of integrity, sterling honesty—"

"Who do I owe now?" he broke in irreverently and ungrammatically.

He was smarter than he looked.

"Not in that blunt way," I remonstrated. "I never blurt out a financial situation. My client and friend is embarrassed for ready money. You will recall the liberality and credit courtesy extended you by Miss Lyman, the singing teacher."

Percy blushed under the grease. "Miss Lorena Lyman?"

"Is really in need of money. The debt is long past due." And I gave him my stock, tremulo-stop dun.

I could see him begin to hedge as he recovered from his surprise and his business training began to come to the fore with the proper stall.

"How does she figure I owe her $100? That's a lot of money for tinkering the vocal chords."

"But I heard your voice," I began. "Such a voice!"

He flushed again. "That may be. Still she's over-charging me—"

"We pay for results. You don't honestly think $100 too much, now do you?"

He looked at me queerly and then a new thought seized him. "She got you, too?" he blurted out.

For a minute or two the shock had me gasping. Then his meaning dawned upon me. He must have been in love with her!

"I admired her voice," I answered carefully.

"She strung me along with lessons I couldn't afford. Then she threw me over."

I can't mix money matters with love and I backed away. Then without warning he closed the circle.

"I owe that bill but I can't possibly pay," he said. "But if you're any good as a collector I can show you a way. I've been trying for over six months to collect an auto repair bill of $125. The debtor is

wealthy; but he's taken a dislike to my singing around the garage and he's making me wait a year as punishment."

"How can he be so inhuman! Who is he?"

"Mitchell Burris."

"What!" I choked, then leaned against an auto for support. It made my head ache to get the combination . Izzy Goldman owed the Plute $150 for three months rent; the Plute owed Percy Pink-Cheeks $125 for auto repairs; Percy was obligated to Miss Lorena for $100 for voice culture and Miss Lorena was indebted to Goldman for $95 for jewelry. And all the claims had drifted into our hands! I began to see a maze of commissions.

I accepted the claim and wasted no time getting to the chief and pouring my soul out. He kindled; I could see from his suppressed eagerness and sparkling eye that the artist in him was joining the financier.

"Where do we begin unwinding?" I asked him.

"That's just it." A few stray thoughts shot out at a tangent. "If I could only trust them all! Izzy might hold out. Would Burris take away his profitable business? Dare we keep Percy's account against him? Perhaps we'd better turn it back. But no; that would break the chain." He stopped a moment and the artistic overruled the commercial. "I'll take the chance. I'll do it!"

"I don't grasp it all."

"Wait and see."

The chief sent out four letters, all urgent, all optimistic. They went to Izzy, the Plute, Miss Lorena and Percy. They were full of flavor. The recipients were requested to appear at a specific time at the office of the Coin Getters Collection Agency, Unlimited, where good news would be awaiting them.

Izzy showed up a day ahead of time and was told to keep patient and wait. His eyes were sticking out like glass beads on a cheap doll. "Did you get her to pay? Or did she sing to you? Quick. Give me relief."

I turned my best smile upon him, the smile I give when we get a forty per cent commission on an easy account, and told him to call to-morrow. He left happy.

The following day the Plute, arriving early, was ushered into the Big C. G's private sanctum to admire the carpet, the chief's work of art and incidentally to receive some substantial rent checks, for we had worked hard and successfully in collecting from his tenants.

The chief told me all about the big session afterwards, though I was listening at the keyhole and got most of it first hand. He got the four of them together, and an unfriendly bunch they were, though each felt more peaceable with a settlement in sight. Each was keyed with the expectation of receiving the money due. Izzy, however, couldn't keep a look of anger out of his eyes as he saw Miss Lorena and thought of the commission he would have to pay. Percy glanced sullenly at the Plute, for the remarks about his singing had left a sore spot on his pride. Miss Lorena totally ignored the high tenor, now at his pinkest, and it must have cut. The Plute alone was without personal feeling, for Izzy's unpaid rent was but a drop in the bucket to him.

The Big C. G. cut loose. He had no trouble with words. For consecutive flow, a lawyer's got the best woman talker reduced to a whisper. The Big C. G. was a lawyer and a collector.

"Kind friends," he beamed like a benevolent Santa Claus, "I've called you together here for an interesting and profitable, to you, experiment in economics."

"Economics" should have been "economy," for the chief was planning a great saving in time and effort.

"While my business is that of collecting accounts, the larger aspects of amicable adjustment and alleviation of financial burdens appeals to me as a better work, and I have gathered you here to help and relieve you."

The Big C. G. didn't specify the kind of relief intended, but went right on: "I have been to a great deal of time and expense to get this little circle complete and only the fact that I operate in a field of some breadth and am constantly striving to help debtors as well as creditors, enables me to put through the experiment I have in mind."

I sat outside and laughed. Really it had just dropped into the Big C. G's lap.

The chief's voice was soft and mellow as he proceeded: "Each of you present here owes another present a bill and each in turn is owed by another. You are, one and all, deserving and honorable citizens who have been unfortunately cramped for money because of leniency to those who have owed you. In being embarrassed yourselves you have embarrassed one another. Each one of you would pay if you could. I am going to help you."

I could hear a little rustling in the room as of expectant interest and a glimmering of the idea the chief had in mind.

The artist went on. "For my services I intend asking a very moderate fee. I have taken all your claims on a twenty-five per cent basis if I am successful; nothing if I lose. I am voluntarily and from a spirit of generosity going to reduce that commission to twenty per cent. I do this because I wish to show you a collection agency is not entirely a cold-blooded, soulless, commission-grinding juggernaut."

It sounded beneficient. The chief's real reason was to hold Izzy's mind to the per cent reduction. Izzy might renege in a pinch, and the Big C. G., who was a student of human nature, knew that a sudden changing of the figure 25 to 20 would completely submerge the jeweler's mind.

"I am going to furnish the means of alleviation," came the clear voice on soft pedal. "Mr. Mitchell Burris, I tender you my firm's check for $150 for payment in full of three months rent due you by Mr. Israel Goldman. Will you kindly give him proper receipts?"

The landlord promptly passed Izzy the evidence of cancelled debt and then remitted his personal check to the chief for the twenty per cent commission.

Of course you understand the little plan. The agency was to start the unwinding and each successive party as he received his money, was to pay his creditor. And you see just why Izzy was the weak link in the chain. Would Izzy come back with the whole $150, would he merely turn over the $95, would he pay his commission, or would he die of heart failure? The Big C. G. figured the jeweler belonged on the very last link of the commission chain, for a sixty per cent fee would already be in his, the chief's possession, and Izzy couldn't well back down or be a piker. Furthermore Izzy could be thinking about his $150 receipt and the five per cent discount he was saving. The chief figured this sufficient cause for joy.

The Plute end was the proper point to begin unwinding, for the wealthy landlord, with his sense of humor, was keen for the experiment and would give it the proper send off.

All seemed to be going well when of a sudden an awful idea hit me and I shook like a man facing his first attachment. Why hadn't I told the chief all? If he had explained his scheme to me, I could have advised him. I thought for a moment I would jump in and stop proceedings. I might get the ball rewound. But no—Izzy never would give up his receipt. I groaned, I must see it through.

The chief's voice mellowed through the door. "Mr. Burris, will you kindly pay the garage bill to Mr. Percy Shilling and save him the long wait. I am sure it will be appreciated."

The Plute must have thoroughly entered into the spirit of the occasion; he was a rapid writer and I heard the quick tearing of a check from its parental stub, and soon Percy could liquidate.

Percy, after deducting for our agency a twenty per cent commission, turned with a sickly love-look and paid the $100 to the singing-teacher, asking only that she give him time to deposit the Burris check first. She accepted payment, but froze Percy with a look. She couldn't mellow even with $100 in her hand.

With the test at hand I listened outside the door in agony. I heard Lorena's short response to Percy; I heard the chief start in with some more word-violets and then I could fairly feel the sudden tension that was in that room as Miss Lorena got to her feet, her eyes ablaze as I knew they could blaze, and started the annihilation.

"Mr. Willoughby Houghton," came like the sizzle of a fuse. "I've barely contained myself to the point of receiving this check.

I've learned of the wholesale methods by which you work. Your scheme may be a demonstration in economics—I am sure it's a demonstration of making money easily—but you didn't study all the links in the chain. Look—look—over your desk!"

It was a knockout. I knew what she meant. Her finger was leveled at the drawings above the chief's head, and pointing squarely at a work of art but a scant six feet from where she was sitting. (I am alluding to the drawing of the bath-room window method of collecting.)

"Your hideous collector harassed me for Mr. Goldman's bill in—in just that manner," came the hot words to my ears. "I should sue you for—for—I don't know what to call it—"

"Why," stammered the chief, beginning to understand, "you mistake our—our motives. That's—that's humor—"

"Humor!" the word crackled like flame. "Humor! Humor! Can't you tell humor from gross insult? Dunned at the bath! Humor!"

There was blank silence in that room and out. The chief, for once, was bereft of speech. Only the Plute coughed. I fancy he was enjoying himself.

"I'll keep this $100 check!" she challenged. "The chain is broken right here. I'll never pay Mr. Goldman. I'll never pay you a commission!"

Another brief silence and then the Plute inquired mildly: "What was the name of that song?"

"Home To Our Mountains."

"Quite a refined piece," came the Plute's voice, and I blessed him. "I am surprised to discover—such—er—discrimination in a—a—collector."

Then Izzy Goldman came to vigorous life. They told me afterwards his face had been a study in dollars and cents as he pondered the new aspect of the case. For Izzy's $95 was not to be paid to him. But he held the $150 receipt. Somewhere Izzy was ahead. But he wasn't far enough in advance. He wanted more.

"It's all a rotten proposition! It's graft!" he shot out. "I take my account against Miss Lyman out of your hands; I'll give it to another agency!"

The Big C. G. gathered Izzy's motives on the instant. "I see your game, you tricky, little scoundrel! You've got your $150 receipt and now you want a chance to get the $95 besides. Our agency will not surrender the account."

It looked bad for the chief's experiment in economics. Art had failed. The agency's $150 was gone. $55 had come back in commissions. Payment on the Plute's check could not be stopped at the bank without an injustice to the capitalist.

The Plute's pleasant voice sifted to my ears: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, and you, kind lady, I am surprised, and pained, truly pained. I have had one of the treats of my life, up to this recent harshness. I am sure there is a misunderstanding. The collector meant nothing. No true lover of music could be really coarse. I am convinced he was but doing his duty. Still I can well see how impolitic it was and I sympathize with the teacher."

"I shall never pay one cent of the bill, nor shall I refund the $100 which Mr. Shilling has owed me so long. I stand upon my rights!"

Izzy, feeling the support, came back with more. "I have no time for dealing with crooked agencies. I'm an honest man! I'm careful in all money matters and upright. I demand you give me back the claim."

And then the Plute got mad and it was a joy to hear him.

"Miss Lyman, you are narrow and prejudiced! Keep the $100! You understand nothing of the give and take of business!

"As for you, Mr. Israel Goldman, my tenant, and with money in the bank, you will at once pay $150 cash for that $150 receipt and pay it to this agency. Also you will pay twenty per cent commission on the $95 you didn't get, or your lease will not be renewed at its expiration in ninety days. Do I convey a clear idea, Mr. Goldman?"

Poor Izzy went through purgatory. "And—and," he gasped, "do I lose the $95 Miss Lyman owes me too?"

"You can try the account with another agency," came the pleasant voice of the Big C. G. "The bill outlaws at sundown."

HOLED THROUGH

By LES WALLACE

The pocket-miner lives always in hope. To-morrow or the next day he will strike it rich, and quit for good. In this story, Old Tom Hackett finds the end of the rainbow.

OLD Tom Hackett threaded his way through the knot of people gathered in the Post Office to the tiers of mail boxes in the alcove at the rear. Fishing about in the pockets of his overalls he found his keys, unlocked Box 479, and drew forth two envelopes containing patent medicine literature and—it being Friday evening—the Teller City Call. Thrusting the letters into his pocket, he snapped shut the little glass-and-metal door of the box, started to open out the paper, hesitated, then rolled it up again and went out, nodding absently to the greetings of several acquaintances as he passed.

He stood for a moment on the step, looking up and down Main Street. Three brilliant pools of light at intervals on Main Street's single block marked the Pool Hall and Meyer's and Goldberg's saloons. Somewhat lesser radiance shone from the windows of the bakeshop, the drugstore, Spilman's butcher shop and Crowder's Candy Store and Soda-Fountain. For the rest gloomy darkness enshrouded the muddy thoroughfare. An empty ore wagon lumbered past, the mule skinner swearing at his team as the wheels crashed over the high boulders that, placed a couple of feet apart, formed the crossing in front of the Post Office. Old Tom peered up the hill where Spring Street, descending steeply, cut at an angle into the head of Main; that way lay home, but the old fellow muttered in his beard as the keen wind with its hint of snow whipped down through the great funnel of Spring Gulch, stinging his eyes till he was forced to wipe away the tears that clouded his vision.

"A little whiskey," he whispered to himself, "a couple o' drinks—it's goin' to be cold to-night!"

Two doors from the Post Office he turned in at one of the patches of bright light—Meyer's. Inside the door he threw open his mackinaw to absorb as much as possible of the warmth that radiated from the glittering nickle stove, and advanced to the bar. There were no other customers for the moment, and Meyer was reading the Call, spread out before him on the bar.

"Evenin', Tom," he said, glancing up. "They've give John a good write-up. I see."

Old Tom nodded. "Little whiskey," he ordered, laying down a silver dollar. Meyer set out bottle and glass and the old man poured himself a generous drink, then another. Buttoning up his coat, he gathered in the change and started for the door.

"Snow?" remarked Meyer casually.

"Pretty soon, I reckon," assented the other, slamming the door as he went out.

Ten minutes later, a little breathless from the climb up Spring Street, he unlatched the gate and toiled up the twenty-odd steps to the cabin perched against the hillside. Unlocking the door, he tossed the paper on the red-clothed table, lit the lamp, and going over to the stove, stirred up and replenished the fire, talking all the while to the big bull terrier that fawned about him. Then he relocked the door for the night, hung his cap and mackinaw on their accustomed peg, and set about getting supper.

While the salt pork was sizzling on the stove he unfolded the Call and found an article headed:

"Death of Teller City Old-Timer."

Between trips to the cupboard for var-

ious articles with which to set the table, he read snatches of the column-length story of his partner's life and death.

"John Starbuck, one of Teller City's oldest citizens, having first come to this town in '82, was found lying dead at the bottom of the Geoffrey Cut early Thursday morning. It is believed that in some way he must have fallen from the railroad bridge which spans the Cut at this point, and met his death on the jagged rocks one hundred fifty feet below.... so far as is known no near relatives survive the deceased.... a miner, having been connected at different times with The Little Alice, The Star Top, 40 Gold Mines, Monmouth and several others of the large local companies.... and was lately engaged in working his own lease on the Cat-Tail, No. 4.... His partner, Mr. Thomas Hackett, relates that on Wednesday evening about nine o'clock, Mr. Starbuck left the cabin remarking that he 'wanted a breath of air before turning in.' Mr. Hackett was then preparing for bed, and asserts that he did not know until he discovered next morning that the other's bed had not been slept in, that anything unusual had happened...."

The odor of scorching salt pork warning him that his supper was more than ready, Old Tom set aside the paper and applied himself to his meal. He ate slowly, reflectively, feeding odd scraps to the dog that sat expectantly at his feet. As soon as he was through, he washed up the few dishes, gave the dog its supper, put the room to rights, and settled himself in his battered armchair for a smoke.

Three years it was, now, since he had "pitched in" with John Starbuck—three hard-working, soul-sickening years of fruitless toil. The lease had promised well when they started: "Two months' dead-work to mend the ladder-way and clean out the old Number Four shaft; after that we'll cross-cut about fifty feet to the vein." That was how John had outlined the proposition when they decided to "go pardners" in the lease, and so it had gone, too, except that they had run the cross-cut seventy-five feet instead of fifty; and then after taking out enough ore for the first shipment—which brought returns only a little more than sufficient to pay for the dead-work—they had driven four feet further and—"holed through!"

They had holed through into the old working; seven times during those three years that had been the invariable end of their hopes. A little good ore, a promising streak, a fair shipment now and again, then the same sickening climax. The entire lease was a network of old workings from which the cream of the ore had been assiduously skimmed during the earlier years when the Cat-Tail had been the biggest mine of the camp. Of a morning "in the good old days" the hill trails would be black with the long files of the miners going on shift. There had been pockets of wire gold—$25,000 in this one, $10,000 in that, $8,000 in another. There were still blocks of virgin ground here and there in the lease; any one of these might— And so it had gone—sick with disappointment one night, flickering hope the next morning that brought with it a determination to try again in some other direction; an occasional small lucky strike that sent their hopes soaring—thus had the Golden Lure drawn them on and ever on!

John Starbuck had been a hard man. That day, now, when a loose rock, a thirty-pound chunk of granite, had come down on Old Tom's shoulder—nine days' layoff it had meant for the two of them, with John nursing and tending him like a mother; then, when they were reckoning the returns a few weeks later, John had docked his partner for the lost eighteen shifts. "It was *your* accident," he had said, "no fault of mine that we lost all that time!" A hard man, yes—but just, for, on another occasion, when the head of his cobbing hammer had flown off, inflicting a deep gash in his cheek and laying him up for more than a week, John had docked himself on pay day for his own lost time. "My own fault," he had remarked, laconically.

The dog, which had been snoring behind the stove, suddenly growled a deep, half-stifled note of warning.

Roused from his fit of retrospection, Old Tom listened for an approaching step. Hearing nothing but the wind which by now was howling half a gale, he snapped

his fingers to the dog, which still whined uneasily.

"What's th' matter, Joe?" he coaxed.

As the big brute came to him he saw that the hair along his back bristled and that he paused twice in the few steps to look back uncertainly, sniffing and whimpering. Then, of a sudden something seemed to be communicated between animal and man; it was as if along Old Tom's spine, too, the flesh contracted and crawled uncannily. Frozen for the moment to utter immobility by the tide of inexplicable horror that surged over him, he became possessed with the feeling that from somewhere in the room eyes were fixed steadily upon him! As this feeling gradually strengthened to certainty, he gave a startled cry, and swiftly turning his head, started toward the chair—John's chair—at the opposite side of the table!

Nothing—absolutely nothing! Yet the realization that there indeed *was* nothing, left him as stunned as if he had actually beheld the familiar figure of his partner seated in its old, accustomed place!

Old Tom awoke at a quarter of seven on Saturday morning and rose stiffly from his bed. The bedroom was bitterly cold, and he lost no time in dressing and building a roaring fire in the kitchen. A couple inches of snow had come down during the night, but the wind was now dead, and the sky clear. As he ate breakfast he talked, partly to himself, partly to the dog.

"Gather yo' wasn't over-pleased when John visited us las' night, hey Joe! Dunno as I was m'self, neither, none to speak of. He alwus stared at me like that, though, ev'ry time I ever took a nip—dam' ol' prohibitionist! Never mind, Joe—if it suits him to ha'nt these here premises, guess we won't grieve none over it; it's his cabin by rights, yo' know. But we'all'll pull our freight for Denver after this shipment, I reckon. We're sick o' minin' an' hard work an' hard luck anyhow."

But there was a preoccupied frown on his face as, stacking the few breakfast dishes to be washed, he considered whether or not to put up his bucket.

"Guess not," he finally decided. "Thar's two load broke on the plat now. I'll just cob the last o' that pile at the botton o' the shaft an' call it a day."

The sun had climbed well above the clear-cut rim of the hills as Old Tom trudged down the track, but the air was crisp and snapping with frost. He unlocked the clumsy padlock and swung back the creaking sheet-iron door of the shafthouse; the machinery had long ago been removed, and the brickwork of the boiler sagged drunkenly at one corner. Picking his way carefully across the broken flooring, he found his candle-hook on the forge in the far corner, pushed out the "snuff" that it held and fitted a fresh candle into place. Then, crawling backward through a hole at the side of the shaft, he found the ladder-way and descended about seventy feet to the level. He passed round the pile of "dirt" ready for hoisting, stuck his candle in a niche and attacked the small heap of rock before him with the cobbing hammer, flinging the waste behind him down an old winze and adding the salvaged ore to the pile of mill-dirt. For two or three hours he toiled thus, muttering an occasional curse as twinges of rheumatism shot through his bent back and arms.

"Wa-al, that finishes her up fer god s'fur as I'm concerned!" he grunted at length, straightening up painfully and glancing toward the breast of their latest drift, now in deep shadow. "Reckon we'll call it 'Tally' an' go above."

As he sat down on the collar of the shaft to get his wind after the climb, he looked distastefully about him. With half decent returns from this shipment, he mused, he would be able to take it easy down in Denver while looking for a job.

"Ol' John," he ruminated, "wouldn't never of quit her yet, I s'pose. Alwus he'd come back at her with his crazy idear o' strikin' one o' them pockets some day. But me, I've had enough; 'pears like the whole place is just honeycombed with ol' workin's; no sooner'd we hit a likely streak than it was the same story over again—'hole through!' Reckon I've holed through on my luck, so to speak; anyhow I'm all through after this here shipment!"

He locked up the shafthouse and started home; but when he had come opposite the

section house where Spring Street crossed the tracks, he stopped, glanced up toward the cabin, then shrugging his shoulders, turned and went down into town. Through all the afternoon he sat at one of he tables in Meyer's Place, talking with various old cronies and taking occasional drinks. But when evening came, and the train from Denver pulled into the depot, he lingered long enough only for the mail to be distributed, then got up to leave. Passing the bar, an impulse struck him. Why not? he argued—John was no longer there to disapprove.

"Gimme a pint o' rye," he said, and slipping the flask into his hip pocket, went on to the Post Office. There were no letters, as usual, only "one o' them everlastin' patent medicine circ'lars."

At the cabin he lit the fire and fell to preparing supper. Presently remembering the flask in his hip pocket, he drew it forth and regarded it a moment, frowning. A furtive expression came into his face and he glanced quickly down at the dog, which sat regarding him curiously with head on one side and ears cocked. Old Tom wet his lips, gone strangely dry, then forced a grin.

"Reckon if John comes round again this evenin' I'll just offer him a nip!" and mumbling to himself, he crossed the room and thrust the bottle back onto the shelf over the table. This shelf, a catch-all for the miscellaneous articles of batchelordom, was crowded to overflowing, so that in making room for the flask he dislodged something that fell with a bang upon the table. At the sound the dog barked sharply and skulked behind the stove, growling to himself. Old Tom picked up the object, and, as the light fell upon it, gave a gasp of amazement. Holding it close to the lamp, he examined it minutely. It was a chunk of quartz, half as big as a man's fist and heavy, wondrously heavy, for it was seamed and lined all through with twisted threads of yellow, glinting metal.

"Wire gold!" he breathed. "God, it's almost solid metal! Now, whar the devil could it've come from?"

It had not been long on the shelf, he noted, from the evident freshness of the fractures and the absence of dust. How, then, had it come there? He could scarcely eat, so great was his excitement and curiosity, and throughout the meal kept picking up the specimen and turning it over and over in his hands. Presently, noticing that the dog was not in his accustomed place by his feet, he called:

"Joe!"

There was no sound. "That's blamed queer!" he muttered. "The brute is generally alwus right on deck at meal times!"

Pushing back his chair, he went over to the stove and peered behind it. The animal lay on its side upon the old bit of rag rug that served as a bed, quite still.

"Come out o' thar!" ordered the man, giving him a shove with his foot. There being no response, he reached down and dragged the big beast to the middle of the floor. The dog was stone dead!

"Wa-al, I'll be damned!" exclaimed the old man in awed surprise. "Now, what the—?" He backed away from the dog and collided with the table.

There was a crash behind him, and wheeling quickly, he beheld the flask lying shattered upon the table! It had fallen from the shelf, striking the chunk of quartz that lay by his plate, and had splintered to bits, the whiskey spreading over the red cloth and running down in little pools upon the floor.

Then—again there crept over him the stealthy horror of the previous evening, that weird obsession that from the empty chair at the far end of the table eyes, cold, unwavering eyes, were staring at him.

Old Tom shivered and backed away to the other end of the room. Suddenly the floor creaked, once, twice, as though beneath the tread of feet, and he distinctly felt the presence of something that brushed close past him. With a strangled shriek he cringed against the wall, thrusting before him with wide-spread, tensed fingers as though to ward off an attack. From between chattering teeth rushed a wild flood of half-coherent pleading.

"John! For God's sake—keep off! Yo' know I didn't go fer to do it a-purpose! I only shoved yo'—just a little shove, John. I didn't mean for to—to hurt yo' none!

Yo' druv me wild with your everlastin' naggin' an' prohibitionist talk! I never drunk much. A man's got to take a little —little somethin' when he needs it. Why couldn't yo' of— Anyway, that bridge railin's so low, I alwus said it wus dangerous low—don't yo' remember? Didn't I, John? An' yo' stumbled—don't yo' mind how yo' stumbled, John? Yo' might've stumbled any time like that! Such a little shove couldn't of— Oh, my God!" The door blew open, letting in a rush of wind and fine snow; the lamp on the table flared, and to the old man's straining ears came the click of the latch on the gate at the foot of the steps outside. Then, silence!

With shaking hands Old Tom closed the door and sat weakly down. His starting eyes came presently to rest upon the remains of the flask of whiskey and he saw that the thick bottom of the bottle stood upright on the table, and that it still held a few spoonfuls of liquor. Reaching forth a trembling hand he poured the whiskey into his empty coffee cup and gulped it down.

For a long time he sat staring blankly at the glittering, golden quartz. Gradually his nerves steadied themselves, and once more he became capable of rational thought.

"Now"—he spoke aloud for the comfort of hearing his own voice—"whar the devil did that chunk o' gold come from? I wonder"—rising to his feet and slamming his hand down on the table—"I just wonder. Why, I ain't been up in the breast fer days past! Could that ol' fox, John, have—?" His voice died as fantastic possibilities came crowding into his brain.

"I'll find out to-morrow—no, TO-NIGHT! I've got to git to know about this thing right away!"

In a fever of excitement he bundled into coat, mittens and cap, and slamming the door behind him, started for the lease.

The night was sharp with stinging frost, and little flurries of snow from the range eddied and swirled past him in the biting wind. The pale light from the stars was reflected from the blanket of snow—a white night, in which objects stood out in bold relief, save when the spinning gusts of snow-particles momentarily obscured his vision. Old Tom trudged down the tracks, every now and then wiping away the moisture that the wind forced to his eyes; his every nerve was keyed to a high pitch, and he peered eagerly ahead; for the familiar outlines of the Cat-Tail shafthouse on the hill above.

Suddenly he stopped, staring into the luminous darkness before him. He was in the centre of a short cut, the rocky walls of which, rising perhaps thirty feet on either side, shut out the reflected light of the stars. Against the brighter patch at the far end of the cut yonder—what was it? For a moment he could have sworn he saw somebody ahead of him, yet there had been no one in sight when he had entered the cut!

"I reckon it wus just th' snow a-whirlin'," he muttered, wiping his eyes again.

Another hundred yards, and once more he paused; yes—no—yes! There, surely, was a dim figure striding on ahead! He started on again, hurrying to overtake the man.

"Hullo!" he shouted. No answer, but as he listened he could plainly hear the crunch-crunch as of feet in the powdery snow. He quickened his pace. A word, a bit of human companionship after the events at the cabin back there, that was what he craved. He drew closer to the shadowy figure, and as he did so it came to him that there was something strangely familiar in that lurching, clumsy gait. Now who—? Abruptly he knew, and with an insane laugh, "Why," he choked, "John—ol' John, himself!"

Strangely, his first sensation was not that of fear, but rather of indignation. Why did this dead man come back to plague him at every turn? Why couldn't he rest decently as other men rested after they were dead? Then the thought occurred to him that it might be as a guide that his old partner had thus broken past the barrier of the grave!

"That's it!" he told himself. "A hard man he wus, but just for all o' that! He musta found one o' them thar pockets in the ol' hole, an' then—then went an' got hisself killed before he'd told me about

it. Now he's tryin' to show me whar it is so's I won't pull out o' the lease, a-leavin it for someone else to come along an' drop onto! That's it—good ol' John!"

He made no further attempt, however, to approach the other, but followed at a distance of twenty or thirty paces. A little farther on, the trail to the Cat-Tail left the tracks and wound up a narrow gulch to the shafthouse on top of the hill. Old Tom watched eagerly; would— Yes, the figure ahead swung off onto the trail! Then he was right; sure enough, John was going to show him the pocket where that gold-glutted bit of quartz had come from! Good old John!

He dropped behind a little, for the trail was steep and climbing "took his wind." When he arrived at the shafthouse his strange guide had disappeared, but Old Tom, fumbling with impatient eagerness, unlocked the padlock and flung open the door. Lighting a snuff he soon found his candle-hook, slipped a couple of extra candles into his pocket, then went over and peered down the shaft. It was pitch dark. Vaguely he wondered if he had expected to see the descending flicker of the other's candle? No matter, and without more ado he started down the shaft.

Arrived at the level, he climbed over the pile of mill-dirt and fairly ran to the breast of the drift. He stopped, transfixed with amazement. The last time he had been up there the breast was about fifty feet from the shaft; now he saw that the drift ran fully ten feet further in, and here, his back still turned, stood the figure of John, his partner, and the light from his candle illuminated the walls of that last ten feet showing them fairly encrusted with glinting, yellow metal, wire gold! Tons of it! The Big Strike at last!

For several minutes Old Tom could do nothing but stand in his tracks and gape in astonishment. At last he found his tongue.

"John!" he cried, and rushed impetuously forward. Three steps—with a crash he brought up against the old breast of the drift and reeled back, stunned with the impact!

When he struggled slowly back to consciousness he was in utter darkness, his candle having been extinguished when it fell. Groping about he soon found and re-lit it, then stared about him. Where was the gold, the wire gold? *In there*—ten feet beyond the solid breast before him! He went mad, beating and tearing with his fingers at the grim barrier of rock, cursing wildly in a delirium of baffled rage!

Gradually the fit passed, and he began to search about. John had been drilling at the last, he knew. Where? Ah, here they were, three holes in the breast! He thrust a long gouger into each of them—two feet, eighteen inches, two-and-a-half feet—plenty for one good round. Feverishly he set to work. Fetching sticks of dynamite, fuse and caps from the box on the ledge at the foot of the shaft, he warmed the powder over the flame of his candle, thrust the sticks into the holes, bit the caps into place, tamped the holes with moist dirt, and bunching the fuses, held the candle to their ends. As they began to sputter he retreated to the shaft. A moment—then the muffled roar of the explosion!

A minute—two—he waited, then plunged into the drift, now reeking with powder smoke. The acrid fumes choked him, blinded him, and his light went out. Cursing, he fumbled for a match, re-lit the candle and held it aloft, advancing toward the breast. The breast? Where was it? He peered through the smoke, and as he did so became aware of a cold wind blowing in his face. A cold wind—tiny particles of snow—OUTSIDE AIR!

"HOLED THROUGH!" he screamed, and plunged forward into—empty space!

EXTRACT from the Teller City Call:

"The body of Thomas Hackett of this town was discovered last Sunday morning at the bottom of the Geoffrey Cut, lying exactly where that of his partner, John Starbuck, was found three days before. It is believed—"

FALL GOODS

By B GUILBERT GUERNEY

According to Abe Goldenthal, "the styles in style are Goldenthal styles." According to Abe's father, style makes very little difference one way or another, because with a partner like Abe, the firm is bound to be listed in the "Business Troubles" column anyway.

BE, that ad ain't half so rotten as the ones we usually throw away our good money on," grunted "Old Man" Goldenthal, otherwise known as Sol, as he shifted his cigar from the right corner of his mouth to the left, and slapped the open page of The Eastern Milliner. The advertisement, which was printed in four kinds of type and flanked by potted shrubs of the species to be found in printers' shops only, took up half a page and announced that Goldenthal and Son's fall line of millinery was ready for inspection. "The Styles in Style Are Goldenthal Styles," was the way it concluded.

"Of course it isn't," came from across the big, glass-covered, flat-top desk. "I wrote it. It isn't rotten at all—it's fine!"

Abe, the "Son" of the firm, was a young man who thought very well of himself, and was entirely satisfied with the world. It was his winning impudence that gained him access to hardened buyers, and once that was had, the Goldenthal line did the rest. Abe had confidence in that line. Moreover, he knew what the name of Goldenthal stood for in the millinery world. "Nerve"—there you have the inner Abe summed up. He was irresistible.

The outer Abe was dressed in a built-to-order suit. He was twenty, good-looking—if you stretch that term a little—and would rather have his blond hair combed back right than be president.

Sol Goldenthal looked over the whole show room before he spoke again. He looked very carefully at the cases under glass, that held the samples, at the tables with the order books invitingly open on them which last was a suggestion of the wily Abe, who was somewhat of a psychologist. Sol glanced for a second at the mirrors, so arranged as to show a hat from all sides. Then he looked out of the window. The whole of the Broadway side consisted of three immense panes of plate glass. Below was a Broadway black with people. Tired of this, he next inspected the corner where the desk was, at which he and Abe were sitting. A cuspidor, with cigar stubs all around it, but none inside, was on his side, while on Abe's was a waste basket with his hat in it. Abe never hung up his hat, save in his serious moods, which were rare.

There was a fine look of contempt in the elder man's eyes, but still not unmixed with fatherly pride.

"Abe," he said, "the trouble with you is, you got a swelled head, but the stuff inside of it isn't so swell. The ad is just as rotten as the rest, after all. But that's no reason why they should put it right next to them Paganner and Zuglowsky thieves."

"Well, you wanted it in the Convention Number, didn't you? It's your own fault that you didn't want to advertise, and then changed your mind at the very last minute, as you usually do, when there was no other space left."

"Keep your five-ninty shirt on, Abe," answered Sol with something like a humorous twinkle in his eye, "the ad ain't the main thing—it's whether the buyers will come." He bent confidentially towards his son. "So far there's only one new buyer sent us an answer to that ad. Listen to her letter. She begs "to avail herself of our kind invitation." She is coming up this afternoon. Her name is—let me see—her signature is Finkelstein—'Miss Finkel-

stein' it says on the back of the envelope. She must be a nice girl, judging from her letter; but for God's sake, Abe, don't lose your head. And listen—I don't know what time I'll be back from lunch. I got to see a couple of men, so I might not come back till after four." He rose, put the letter in his pocket, and lit a fresh cigar. Cigars were first on the list of things forbidden by his physician. His face was yellow—very yellow—from jaundice, but the cigar was black—very black—as he went to his dietary luncheon. He kept the diet very strictly, with only an occasional lapse each day. But he relieved his conscience by chewing a new kind of patent pill on his way down in the elevator.

When Miss Finkelstein came, Abe hastily put the Women's Daily Wear over the Police Gazette, kicked three madras-collared stock boys out of the way, shouted an order over his shoulder to no one in particular, yanked at his necktie in passing a mirror, and greeted Miss Finkelstein with a smile.

To say that she was a pippin would be wrong. She was rather a russet peach, if such literary Burbankcy be permissible. Hers was the olive complexion with which pink cheeks show most beautifully; while her smile would have sold millions upon millions of packages of any dentifrice, or made the fortune of a chewing gum. And her hair! It was really black. It shone, what one could see of it, beneath her hat—a hat somewhat like the basin that Don Quixote wrested from the barber, but without the nick; turned upside down; black; a broad, red, moire ribbon across it held down at each end with a small bouquet of flowers. And one could just catch a glimpse of her small, beautifully pink ears.

Her tailor-made suit had been poured over her, and had then moulded itself; while her shoes had been made especially for her—they were two sizes smaller than the smallest regularly manufactured.

The policeman who helped her across Broadway had made all the traffic stand still for almost a minute, and forgot to swear at it; the Human Directory, who stood near the elevators, conducted her to the very one she needed; the elevator boy shot past every floor but hers; the Goldenthal office boy held the show-room door open for at least five minutes after she had gone in; and Abe himself offered her no less than three chairs. But the telephone operator, who was blond and sat right opposite the elevators, sniffed and turned up her nose.

As the elder Goldenthal had predicted, Abe "lost his head," but this time hopelessly; and his heart followed the head. He who knew every style, every number, gave the price of No. 95375 (a model that sold for $53.75 per dozen) as $31.50, for he was watching two brown eyes that sparkled and laughed; and love—real love—was for the first time battering at the invincible Abe's heart. But when a forty-eight dollar number was priced at sixty, there sounded through the room a laugh; a rippling laugh and low, a laugh good to hear. One thought of dryads and of fern-banked, purling brooks when Miss Finkelstein laughed.

"Why," she smiled, and stopped with pencil poised over a diminutive note book, "It can't be!" And Abe awoke and corrected himself, only to make worse blunders. He was absorbed in the contemplation of two hands, coming out of white frills—pink-nailed hands, white and well-shaped, fluttering and writing. And somehow or other, as the young woman looked at a sample there was something about the pretty eyes that narrowed that reminded him of a camera. She looked at a model in all ways, judged each one, seemed to memorize it. Each was held up to the light; each was turned around several times; each was considered carefully—that is each one of those that pleased her. The way that she passed the "lemons" by forced Abe's admiration. A few of the hats with which she was most pleased were tried on, and all the while she chuckled and smiled at some inward joke—a huge joke, it seemed. But she did not give an order. Under normal conditions Abe would scarcely have let anyone escape without getting one. He would have looked askance at anybody who did not make out one. But Miss Finkelstein just murmured something about consulting her employer. Abe did not even

know what she was saying. He heard only her voice.

Abe himself escorted her to the elevator. He pressed the button six different times during the half-minute they had to wait, and though he was bare-headed, conducted her to the very street. Miss Finkelstein smiled to the last, and Abe went up only when she was out of sight. And that day the sun set at two o'clock.

The next day, and the day after, the Abe, who used to stroll casually into the place at nine o'clock, opened the door—and the mail—at seven, heedless of his father's sarcastic and wondering remarks. But not one of the letters bore the signature he would have given his soul to see. It was he who answered the telephone when the bell rang—that is, if he was within a mile of it; and his heart stood still whenever the elevator door opened.

On the third day, when he could wait no longer, Abe decided that he must find Miss Finkelstein. Not knowing what firm she was with, he condescended to ask the bookkeeper for her letter, but the bookkeeper informed him that the Old Man had it. And the world was again dark to Abe. With all his nerve, he could not summon enough to ask his father for the letter. The Abe who had never hitherto been sentimental was now actually afraid. Perhaps his father would wax sarcastic at *her* expense, and Abe would never be able to bear it. It would have hurt him worse than a broken arm, or—or the loss of a big account.

Thus the fevered, miserable week went, and the next began. At noon one day when Abe stepped out of the elevator, followed by a retinue of three boys with sample cases, the telephone operator gave him a compassionate look that was all but genuine.

"Abe," she sighed, "if you have a suit of armor handy, you'd best wear it. The old man has given the bounce to only three operators and the assistant bookkeeper so far. He was like a cyclone the whole morning, and he's been screaming for you every minute. I wish you well, though I have my doubts."

"Thanks, Sadie," said the pitied one. Her real name was Marie McFloyd, and nothing maddened her so much as to be called Sadie.

Although during the three hours he had been away he had sold to three new houses, and had in his coat pocket what he would have described as "fat, juicy" orders from each one, Abe opened the show-room door with misgivings. When Sol Goldenthal discharged his employees, it meant either that his liver was playing havoc with him, or that something had gone wrong with the business.

Abe was greeted with a sarcastic "Come in!"

"Come on in," continued the elder Goldenthal. He was chewing the fifth cigar within an hour, and expectorating directly into the cuspidor—another bad sign; he usually missed it in his calm moments.

"Come in, Abe, while you got where to come in. I've been looking through the 'Business Troubles' column, and I'm surprised, Abe, I'm surprised! We ain't there yet! We ought to have been there long ago, with you in the business."

Abe *hung up* his hat, and sat down at the desk, facing his father. He knew just what would happen. He would ask, and then Sol would explode. But done it must be.

"Suppose you tell me what's happened. It may be of no use," he forestalled the other, "but tell me anyway," and he waited for the explosion to come. It came.

"What's happened? You ask me! You! Listen, Abe, what we should do is advertise. That's it—advertise—and then the auctioneers will be selling our stock at fifty cents on the dollar. And if it's too much trouble to sell goods, why, we can give them away, that's all."

There was a silence, and then, after an inward struggle, Goldenthal Senior shook his head despondently, and spoke in the tones of one who gives up hope for a lost soul, the lost soul being Abe.

"Listen—Max Sokolower was here right after you left. He looked over the whole line, and"—he paused for effect—"he hasn't given us an order."

"Why?" Abe started in his chair.

"Why? That's right—go ahead—ask me

again! Why! He asks why!" Sol's face became as livid as its yellowness would allow.

"Yes, why? So far I don't know what's the matter, nor what I have to do with it."

The Goldenthal part of the firm gave the Son a murderous look.

"Abe, do you remember who you showed the line to last week?" he asked craftily.

Abe pondered a moment.

"Well, there was that Glutzer fellow, and the man from Durbin's, and Mrs. Solomons, and—and"—here a sheepish look of dreaminess overflowed his face, and he pronounced the name as if it were hallowed—"and Miss Finkelstein."

Goldenthal *pere* looked just once at his son's face, turned away and spat in disgust, and clinched his fists.

"Abe," he said, "do you know who she is?"

What Abe wanted to say was that she was the sweetest, dearest, best little girl in all the world. But he checked himself. Something warned him that his father was in no sentimental mood just then. What he did say was, "What's that got to do with it?"

"I asked, who—is—she?" Sol repeated in the tones of a Torquemada, emphasizing each word.

Now, in spite of his almost six feet of height, Abe was a little afraid of his father. He was afraid of no other man, but he was not sure that his father might not "wallop" him, as he put it, in spite of his size and age, and small as his father was. Therefore he thought it best to answer.

"Why, she's a buyer of course, if that's what you mean."

The elder man leaned forward, and spoke as if he were asking "Where were you on the night of the murder?" after the manner of a prosecuting attorney who knows, but asks to confound the accused.

"Who for?" he asked.

Abe's face was a blank.

"I don't know. But she's a buyer, all right."

"You don't know!" the other spluttered. "You don't know!" And he raised his eyes and hands to Heaven.

"Well, who is she then, if not a buyer?" Abe was getting a little heated himself.

Sol enjoyed his son's suspense for a full minute. Then he spoke slowly and distinctly, that nothing of the significance might be lost.

"She is," he said, "the head-designer for Paganner & Zuglowsky."

A poisonous, bitter smile crept over the yellow features, and he spat again.

Abe was stunned. Now he understood what she had been laughing at all the while. He remembered her eyes, the way she had looked at each model, and her note book. He kicked himself—kicked hard, but carefully, lest his father notice, and remark upon it. True, the Old Man was just as much to blame. He had simply told Abe to show her the line, and never bothered to enquire about her. The letter was lying on the desk and Abe picked it up. It was written on the stationery of a Washington Square hotel, and there was not a word about the firm she bought for, nor did it say that she was a buyer. It was simply a request that she might see their line, simply worded, charmingly written, the hand-writing small, pretty, and legible. Thank God, she had not told a single lie throughout. But he knew what it was—her charm had extended even through the letter, and had blinded such an astute business man as his father. Instead of accusing he was admiring, but he was still incredulous. The letter, however, was a fact; so he folded the fact, and put it in the left side vest pocket, right over the spot where the popular mind believes the heart to be.

"Who told you *that*?" he asked, avoiding his father's scornful gaze.

It was only after a prolonged silence that Sol condescended to answer.

"Max Sokolower. He looked through the entire line, and every once in a while, when he'd come across a star number, he'd shake his head and clack his tongue. And when he's all through, he pushes the order book away! 'Sol,' he says, 'Sol, you know I bought most of my goods from you for the last twenty years, don't you? Well, I can't buy any at all from you this season.'"

"'Why?' I says, 'Why can't you?'"

"'Well,' he says, 'I don't know whether by rights I should tell you.' So he does. 'Because,' he says, 'I bought all of your models I liked at Paganner & Zuglowsky's, and I got them twenty per cent cheaper.' I was mad—I almost cried, Abe. I swore to him—I showed him the Paris models."

He waved his hand toward an open glass case, containing the original models he had brought over from Europe with the very latest cure for jaundice. They were in disorder now, and not in their usual sanctified positions. All were turned upside down, so as to show the labels—labels that bore Parisian names which milliners the world over whisper in reverential awe.

"I showed him all them," Sol continued, "then I said, 'Max, there's the original models. Do you mean that we could have copied them Hester Street pirates?' 'No,' he says, 'I don't mean that.' 'Then what do you mean, Max?' I says. 'What do you mean?' 'I mean that they copied from you, that's what I mean.'" Sol stopped for one sad second.

"I ask him, with tears in my voice, how they could have done it. Them fellers couldn't get a fare to a Hackensack picnic, let alone send one of their crooks over to the other side. And our models are unique. So they must have copied them of us. But how? 'Well,' he says, 'I ain't saying anything. BUT—' You know how he says that 'But,' Abe. 'You got a good designer, Sol, BUT—Paganner & Zuglowsky have a better one. Yours is all right, and I ain't saying anything; BUT—their Miss Finkelstein has him beat four and three quarter dozen ways.' 'Miss ,what?' I ask him, and I feel my liver tearing loose. 'Finkelstein,' he says. 'What's her first name?' I ask him. 'Ida,' he answers, 'Miss Ida Finkelstein.' I couldn't believe him—the same as you can't, Abe."

Abe winced.

The audacity of the plan, and the simplicity that insured its success, forced one to admire it. The nervy Abe could appreciate such a master stroke. The ethics of it were perhaps not so nice, but then, such things were done every day on a smaller scale. The styles were copied from newspaper advertisements, from shop windows; even bought on approval from the stores, copied, and then returned. The Goldenthal styles were the most imitated. It was a costly compliment, but paid season after season. Why, only a couple of seasons ago, that close-fitting Quaker cap which four out of every five women you met were wearing, was Goldenthal Style No. 05921. Abe had sketched it on the back of a program during an intermission of "The Quaker Girl." The Style spread like wildfire over the whole land. But the Goldenthals got very little out of it save the satisfaction of having originated it.

To go just a little further, why should not the styles be copied at the very source, instead of second-hand? The novelty of the thing—its very boldness, the bigness of it, redeemed it. Thus did the lover make excuses, and then there came an idea—a big, flashing idea.

"Holy thunder!" he exclaimed. "A girl like that is a wonder! And clever? Why, she's worth her weight in diamonds!"

Admiration was oozing out of his every word. He paused for a second, so as not to appear too anxious; then asked, as nonchalantly as a book agent, "Say, Pop, why shouldn't we get her?"

Sol ignored the familiarity of "Pop." He merely tapped his head with his knuckles; a mock look of admiration came over his face; and he mimicked the other's tone with such scathing sarcasm, that Abe simply squirmed.

"Spoken like an onion-head! Smart boy, Abe, smart boy! Take it from me—a boob is an awful thing! Don't you suppose your old father has enough brains in his poor, foolish head to see that we should have her? I got through with Sokolower at half-past nine; at ten I was over in that robbers' den; and at five after I had her refusal."

"What's the matter? She hasn't got a contract, has she?"

"No; but all the same, she doesn't want to leave them."

"But why didn't you offer her a bigger salary?"

"I offered her twice what she was getting—and I left it to her to say what her salary is."

"Well, why doesn't she want to change?"

"Because, believe me, I got to say it—though she did work us—that girl is clever, and she knows human nature. She says we'd never trust her; we'd always be thinking that if she worked us once, she'd give us away, even if she was with us."

"Well, I'll say just one thing—the only way we can be safe is to have her on our side."

"I told her that, too. But she says she's loyal to her employers—I believe her there—and she wouldn't leave them."

"I'll bet you I get her!" Goldenthal the younger got up, took his hat down, and put it on.

"Go ahead, Abe, go ahead. I wish you luck. Myself I give it up, and I give you up, too. But what I'd like to know is when are you going to quit going crazy after every skirt you meet?"

"Pretty soon, Pop, pretty soon," and the door swung to after Abe. The father just shook his head and sighed.

The redoubtable Abe came back shortly before the closing hour, and threw his hat into the basket. His father was having an argument with the head-designer, and after that gentleman had resigned—designers are never discharged; they always resign at the psychological moment—Sol sat down at the desk in a little better mood.

He did not want to ask, but curiosity overcame him.

"Well, Abe." he sneered, "let's hear you crow."

There was no answer. He looked up. The gentleman addressed was lost in thought; pleasant, no doubt, judging by his idiotically happy smile.

"Well," repeated the Old Man, "let's hear how you got her." There was the same mockery in his tone, for he felt sure the smile was meant to hide Abe's chagrin.

That young man woke up with a start.

"She's coming in to work for us, two weeks from to-day," he said, slowly

Sol's face lit up. He was gradually returning to that state of mind in which the world did not look so much of a study in blue and brown. The afternoon's discharges had helped—discharges were always a sure antidote for his bad spirits—and Abe's success almost banished his spleen.

"How'd you manage it?" he asked eagerly. "Why two weeks—why not tomorrow?"

Abe answered the last question first, and the first last; but he was short and to the point.

"She's going to the Bermudas on a two weeks' honeymoon," he said. "You see, Pop, I married her this afternoon."

Benjamin Franklin said: "It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it." Put that unnecessary expenditure into War Savings Stamps.

The Black Cat Club

CHILDREN OF TWILIGHT

When a writer chooses the twilight of history for his time setting he elects an advantage and courts a disadvantage. Presuming on the reader's ignorance of society in the primal age he is at liberty to bring anything to pass, for who of us can gainsay him? But he thereby challenges our credulity and runs the risk of overstraining our indulgence and alienating our sympathy.

Our author has very deftly steered in midstream and avoided the rocks. Probably realizing the truth of the literary dictum that folks prefer a probable impossibility to an improbable possibility he gives us a story that may be termed a probable possibility. In CHILDREN OF TWILIGHT the hero is too Grecian and Apollo-like and the heroine with her golden sun blazed hair and white milky silvered skin a bit too fair. Ethnological researches as well as anthropological knowledge of extant peoples in a low state of culture point to race progenitors who were yellow, brown or black. But why spoil a good story with unemotional scientific criticism! A snub nosed woman and a flat headed man could hardly stage a satisfactory love scene. By picturing the youth a relapse from his semi-civilization, a relentless hunter who improvidently subsists on the catch of the day and the maiden an escape from the "growing up girls' hut" the author throws in enough suggestion of the primitive to blunt our objections. We may be permitted to doubt, however, whether primal man was rollicking and care-free. The world was too full of things taboo.

The action-descriptions are superb. The vivid recital of the battle with the tiger cat is a masterpiece of sustained interest. An admirable touch, that strengthens the always difficult slide from the main climax, is the youth's delirious mistaking of the girl for his late tiger antagonist. When full consciousness comes the love tone is dominant in the plot orchestration and we are brought abruptly to the conculsion. "Twisted his tail!" truly feminine—and feline! —*Elliot Field*

THAT ROGUE, FLEURELLE

This yarn may be considered as an amusing sketch of a man's adventures in China wherein is demonstrated the prestige of the white race. It is a satire on the credulity of the Oriental and not in any respect a real short story. It abounds in interesting incidents, but it cannot be said of them that they merge into or follow one another to promote the story to its logical denouement.

Greater unity could have been obtained had the story opened with some complicating situation between Fleurelle and the woman. His stumbling upon her by accident is inartistic, his sudden abandonment of her a cruelty, and her unaccountable appearance when he lay wounded in a shanty by the roadside is also adventitious. Her refusal to wed him on account of her traditions is the best and most convincing part of the narrative, and his proposal to wed her is the only redeeming feature of his rascally conduct.

The weakness of the story is in its inherent lack of development to a logical finish; its dearth of snappy dialogue, its lengthy descriptions that slow the story down to a deadly dullness.

—*Pendleton P. Karr*

The component parts of THAT ROGUE, FLEURELLE constitute a good and likeable yarn, but it is almost "snowed under" with verbosity. Over 2,500 words are used to tell us that while under the influence of wine, Fleurelle demanded as a parting gift, his host's fairest woman, and was surprised the next morning to find that his demand had been complied with! —*Jay Constant*

Another fault, and to me it is a grave one, is that the story has two endings, one that is natural and one that is decidedly artificial. It would have been much wiser and much more artistic to have ended the story finally with the Chinese woman's refusal to marry Fleurelle, and not to have gone on to use that amateurish trick of playing on the reader's sentimental strings until they react with a sour resonance. The ending should have been placed where the natural developments demanded it.

—*Harry A. Potamkin*

THE CAPTIVATION OF WASH HANKS

THE CAPTIVATION OF WASH HANKS is the best story in this number. It bears every indication of being done by one who has actually seen just such characters. There must be something more than the facile handling of an unfamiliar dialect to convince the reader that there are no false touches in the local color of a story. Jane Hicks has been successful in painting her pictures of a primitive couple, who

"surrender themselves completely to the current." The widow, "Piggy" is no less elemental for the fact that she is energetic, sleek, and jolly, and "goes down" often to the foot of the mountain, than is Wash, the newly made widower, unable to resist the companionship at the dance the very night of his wife's burial. Piggy was as frank in her inability to exist without a man, as Wash was obvious in his yielding to the lure of Piggy's sleekness, her corn pone soaked in bacon fat, and her thick, smooth, inviting bed, with the red, white, and green quilt on it. The style of the story is appropriately simple and straightforward, but the author has a remarkably happy way of choosing exactly the right expression to present a picture in the fewest possible words. Note the paragraph beginning, "Wash laid his greenish coat on the seat of the wagon." In eighteen lines we have a complete picture of the lonely, shiftless man, his uncomfortable surroundings, now completely neglected since Lizzie died, his hungry animals that could not rouse him—and then the curl of smoke that told of Piggy Scruggs and supper! The preparation for action is almost as concise and pointed as the conclusion: "Lively here. Nicer'n up thar. 'Tain't so pore." There is scarcely an instance of direct description in the whole story; yet the characters stand before us with undeniable clearness. We should like to see more of this author's work.

—Mrs. John Rush Powell

One of the most successful touches in this story is that each of the two ludicrous characters is allowed a little redeeming dignity. Prosperous Piggy reveals fine generosity and kindness in her desire for a man when she says, "'Tain't so much work as 'tis lonely. Eatin' by myself." And Wash, in providing himself a pleasant berth immediately after burying his wife, was not really despicable—just weak. "Wash smiled a little," the story says at the end, "not a mean smile, but one of content—as he followed her with a chair." Thus, by showing sympathetically how people are drawn together through sheer loneliness and the human need of companionship, the author adds appeal to humor, and succeeds in giving her characters not only personality but humanity.

—Velma Van Nest Walder

THE QUITTERS

Love is no respecter of persons, nor yet of time or place. It may be born in "the light that lies in a woman's eyes," or the quick flash of a smile. It may come alike into the hurry and bustle of the busy city restaurant, and the quiet, fragrant lanes of the country. But everywhere it is the same. The theme of the love of a man and a maid is as old, and as eternally new, as the world itself. The charm of this little story lies chiefly in its "atmosphere," and its human appeal. The author has employed the device of contrasting scenes to create an atmosphere which is pleasantly refreshing. The local color is good, and the clever, amusing realism of the opening dialogue catches our interest from the start. And again, he uses no superlative adjectives to give us a picture of his heroine, but allows us to form our own impression of her from the words of the other characters. We find ourselves at once interested in the affairs of this boy and girl, common, every-day people like ourselves, cheerfully earning their living amid not too pleasant surroundings, yet feeling in their hearts the same inner longing for the quiet restfulness of the country.

The little night scene of the singing, when, after the rush of the busy hours, the restaurant employees relax for a moment from the round of duty to enjoy themselves in so human a manner, is refreshing, and we find ourselves in harmony with their mood, and almost joining in the singing. Told in a few simple words, the scene seems real. And then comes the dramatic incident of Dick's quarrel with the proprietor's son, swiftly followed by the consequences, which seem to spell tragedy for the boy and girl.

The story in itself is simple, yet there is something in it which makes us feel a sympathetic understanding of the two, and feel the same irresistible call which impelled these two children of the city to break away from it all, and swing themselves aboard the roaring, rumbling train as it swept through the night, and let it carry them away into the new life together.—*E. Harold Cummings*

PROPRIETY AND A PULLMAN

When I read: "'Listen, kiddie,' he said softly, 'be a sport, can't you?'"—I fairly held my breath. This is the first time I have ever read a BLACK CAT story that has really given me a complete surprise. The fact that Maitland was traveling with his wife seems very obvious on re-reading, but I confess that it never dawned on me at all the first time until I had reached the very end.

I think the plot is unique and highly interesting. The faint suspicion of the risque which comes in at the above-mentioned lines adds eighty per cent to the story, especially since the ending knocks any shadow of suspicion into a cocked hat.

It may be objected that wives don't do this sort of thing, that is, that they would not carry a joke so far. Marg not only ought to have been an actress; Marg was an actress, and at bottom all women are

actresses. Added to that, all jealous women, such as our heroine is, derive pleasure in a little display of cruelty, especially toward those whom they love.

—Henry V. Miller

ROOM TWENTY HAS A TENANT

The love and longing for a lost wife and child must be very strong in the heart of a man to draw him back to the scene of their death after an absence of thirty-five years with the premeditated intention of following them by committing suicide.

This craving for Mary and little Jim who died of smallpox while he was trying to realize the dream which brings men flocking to that golden El Dorado, the West, is doubtless intended by the author to stand out as the dominating passion in the life of the man who comes back to die in Room Twenty. But he has overlooked the vivid background he has provided, against which this emotion becomes pallid and vague by contrast. This is furnished by the tireless search for gold, during which the man faced "death in a thousand forms—along the slopes of foothills; in the dry washes of streams; in barren, heart-breaking wastes."

His strongest passion was a hunger for gold, a hunger so keen and overwhelming that it dulls grief for his loss and delays his self destruction through three decades and a half, until the "mountains were pouring a never ending stream of golden grains into his lap." Not until then is he ready to follow Mary and Jim.

This is Hold-up Number One on the trail to the hereafter.

The advent of the little Mexican boy constitutes Hold-up Number Two; a far more worthy and understandable cause than the first, if we concede that suicide is justifiable at all.

Somehow there is much more of heart warming pleasure in the fact that a desolate starving child has come into the care of a responsible man with millions "to burn" than there is in the angle presented by the salvage of a would be suicide who is about to embark into the next world on account of grief which he has endured stoically for thirty five years.

—Louise Detlefs

Editor's note: Do not try to criticise every story in this number. Put your energy into one sane, carefully written criticism. Make it a finished essay, not merely a synopsis, and do not write more than five hundred words. Write on one side of the paper only. The number of words in the criticism should be written at the top of the first sheet, together with the name and address of the author. Criticisms of stories in this number should be mailed to the BLACK CAT not later than September 10.

The "OPEN DOOR" For WRITERS

The very authors whose stories are most in demand by magazine editors to-day started their careers by writing stories for the BLACK CAT. Among them are Rupert Hughes, Alice Hegan Rice, Harry Stilwell Edwards, Will N. Harben, Geraldine Bonner, Sewell Ford, Holman Day, Cleveland Moffett, Juliet Wilbor Thompkins, Ellis Parker Butler, Susan Glaspell, and, to mention some of the more recent arrivals among the top-notchers, James Francis Dwyer, Ida M. Evans, Hapsburg Liebe, William Hamilton Osborne, William J. Neidig, and Octavus Roy Cohen.

There are new writers coming forward every day, and the BLACK CAT believes in being near the source of supply, in being almost *the* source of supply. It is always ready to publish the work of those who show promise, bases its judgment on merit alone, and gives the same consideration to the new writer that is given to the writer with an established reputation.

There is no better way to learn to write than by analyzing the work of other writers. Thus, it was to help the aspiring writer to a quicker understanding of short-story principles that the BLACK CAT CLUB was formed and made a regular feature of the magazine. The idea of the CLUB is simple: It offers the writer an opportunity to master technique by study and criticism of BLACK CAT stories. These criticisms are the writer's "finger exercises." Each month the best critical essays are published, with the names of the authors, *and paid for at the rate of one cent per word.* Membership is open to all who subscribe to the magazine. Several members have had stories published in the BLACK CAT and other magazines since joining the CLUB. By studying stories that *have sold* you may learn to write stories that *will sell.*

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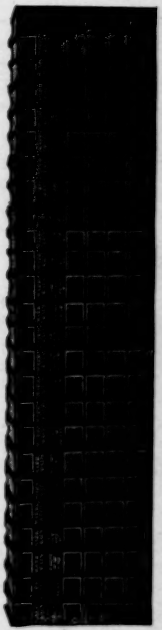
Once more you will laugh with Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn—but you will want to cry as you laugh. For behind the joy of youth is the reality of life—the philosophy you did not see when you were a boy.



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We watched for his great white head in the crowds—we hung on his every word—we smiled, ready to laugh at his least word. But now he is gone we love him—yes—he's the familiar friend—but he has joined the immortals. More than Whitman—than Longfellow—than Poe or Hawthorne or Irving—he stands for America—with the great of the earth—the Homer of this land—a prince of men—a king among dreamers—a child among children.

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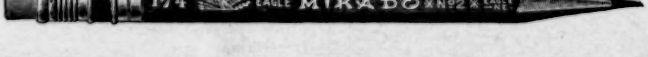

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